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ANNE PHILLIPS

Sexual Equality and Socialism

AMOS OZ

Social Democracy and the Kibbutz

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Zelda Bronstein on **Feminist Pundits and Hillary Clinton**, with responses from Joanne Barkan, Barbara Ehrenreich, Erica Jong, Katha Pollitt, and Ruth Rosen

RICHARD RORTY
on WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON

GERALD EARLY
on RALPH ELLISON

SUSAN GEORGE
on THE WAR OF IDEAS

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Editor's Page

This issue of *Dissent* continues our reconsideration of what it means to be "left," with contributions by Anne Phillips and Amos Oz. Both pose sharp questions and recognize that these are difficult times for defining the left. Still, they uphold strong commitments to equality-friendly democracy.

Oz urges a sense of balance in the postcommunist world, rejecting the social cruelties of neoliberalism—today's Economic Correctness—as well as the spiritual totalitarianism of religious fundamentalism. He speaks for moderation while angrily protesting the West's "pornography of consumption." Although "half of humanity is impoverished and without hope," the well-to-do rush "to earn more than they need so that they can purchase things they don't really want so as to impress strangers they don't care about." Phillips is an egalitarian who believes the abolition of all distinctions among people is undesirable. She argues, however, that "differences and inequalities have to be detached from the accident of being born male or female, so that the choices we make and the inequalities we condone reflect individual rather than sexual variation."

The social consequences of the "birth lottery" is an underlying theme in Richard Rorty's discussion of William Julius Wilson's efforts to determine "why millions of American children are leading miserable lives in the ghettos." He says that readers of Wilson's latest book will become contemptuous of those talking heads who tell us that all would be well if inner-city youth would just be rugged individualists.

Such punditry is all too current these days, raising questions about how we achieve "public understanding." Robert Dahl looks for ways in which citizens can pursue thoughtful public conversation. Susan George addresses a corresponding matter. For a quarter-century, right-wing money has wisely invested in intellectuals, journals, and think tanks. Not so on the left. (Try to fund-raise for a small, independent magazine of the left.) Long ago Antonio Gramsci insisted on the importance of the war of ideas, of undermining the intellectual dominance of the right. George asks: what happens when the right, but not the left, is Gramscian.

Surely, the quality of public debate declines. *Dissent*, on the other hand, has never been shy about intelligent argument. In this issue, Zelda Bronstein suggests that feminists have been insufficiently critical of Hillary Clinton, with ramifications for feminist politics—and some leading feminists dissent from her claims. Critical issues are raised: for example, does a feminist by definition stand on the "left"?

Certainly the First Lady's husband doesn't stand there, having backed the worst social legislation in six decades (welfare "reform"), and a budget combining tax breaks for the privileged and cutbacks in domestic programs. He is a willing prisoner of Economic Correctness.

Will Britain's new prime minister be likewise? Tony Blair's victory is a cause for cheer, no doubt. Talk was, not long ago, of Labour's imminent extinction; now the Tories have suffered their worst setback since 1832. It seems that political worlds can yet be turned upside down.

Many of Labour's political initiatives are attractive, as Alan Ryan points out. But has Labour embraced Economic Correctness? Blair emphasizes his distance from much of Labour's heritage—so much so that both *Newsweek* and *L'Express* put Margaret Thatcher's picture on their election-eve covers, with captions declaring her the victor, whatever the tally. One waits for "New Labour" to prove this wrong. Its decision to hand control of short-term interest rates to the Bank of England isn't auspicious—and it is anything but an extension of social democracy. (One notes that the French socialists defeated the right by opposing Economic Correctness.) "New Labour," coming on the disagreeable heels of our "New Democrat," will pose some challenges to definitions of the "left."

—M. C. □

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CAMPAIGN FINANCING: FOUR VIEWS

Michael Walzer

All political systems are subject to corruption, but not to the same kind of corruption. The corruptions of American democracy are determined by two things: the radically unequal distribution of wealth in our society and the private financing of political campaigns. We can deal with corruption, then, in two different ways: by radically reducing the inequality and tolerating the private financing or by tolerating the inequality and banning the political use of private money.

I have always preferred the first of these options, a preference that derives in part from my experience of left politics, where we are continually raising money from friends and comrades and judging the strength of their commitment by their readiness to contribute to the cause. We also ask for time and energy, but working people, especially working people with children, don't always have time and energy to spare. A little bit of money ties them to us: it is a sign and a bond.

The case is the same in politics more generally. Time, energy, and money are signs of intensity; they are the media with which we signal to our fellow citizens that this issue or candidate or party means a lot to us, more than a mere vote can indicate. However strongly we feel, we can only "spend" one vote, but we can divide our time, apportion our energy, contribute our money in differentiated ways, which reflect our precise judgments of importance and value. A democratic system ought to be able to register these different judgments, and that requires that just as voting is a private and individual matter, so should contributions be private and individual.

But this will only work as an antidote to corruption if resources are more or less equally distributed among individuals. And that is a fantasy in America today. So the alternative, which is at least a little less fantastic, is public funding of all political campaigns. I think of this as a second-best option because it reduces the possibilities for political participation. The more the state is involved, the less people are likely to act on their own. Even contributions of time and energy will drop, since one of the main activities that require such contributions is fundraising. Think of the endless parties, benefits, bake sales, raffles, mass mailings, telephone marathons through which money is raised for politics (as for religious institutions, charities, and so on). This is participatory financing, and of course it is eclipsed when the very rich buy themselves a senator (or a president). But won't it also be eclipsed when the state funds everyone's campaign?

But of those last two possible campaign funders, the very rich or the democratic state, we have to choose the second. The courting of the very rich by democratic politicians is obscene (and the obscenity is worse when the politicians are Democrats, because Democrats—no doubt this is a myth but it has sometimes been a useful myth—are supposed to represent the rest of us). So this is a courtship we should ban, even if there are sure to be illicit liaisons: money

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passed, promises made in the dark. I would only suggest that the public funding not be lavish and that television time, especially, be limited by law. Then parties and candidates will still be forced to mobilize their followers to do something more than vote. They will need people to walk the streets and knock on doors, to organize meetings, distribute leaflets. It's an old-fashioned vision; I also favor parades and bonfires. The citizens of a democracy should not be allowed to content themselves with the simple act of voting. We need to avoid the kind of state involvement in political campaigns that reduces corruption by reducing activity and engagement.

Joanne Barkan

Democratic politics in my version of utopia looks different from Michael Walzer's version in at least one way. When thousands of energetic citizens take part in a presidential or congressional campaign, they might help organize a rally, update a web site, pass out leaflets, or clean up headquarters, but they would not get on the phone to ask for money. Public funds would pay for political campaigns. The contests would be blissfully short, intense, and economically efficient. Television stations would "donate" air time for serious debate. Democracy—including the grassroots participatory kind—would be better off.

Of course, former fat-cat power brokers would miss private fund-raising; they would no longer be able to buy candidates and shape government policies. That's the purpose of public financing. But Michael Walzer says he, too, would miss private fund-raising. He believes grassroots involvement would decline and citizens would lose an important way of indicating the intensity of their support. In his ideal world, he would like to see resources "more or less equally distributed among individuals" and privately funded campaigns.

I don't understand why Walzer sets up the solution to the corruption of American democracy as an either/or proposition: "We can deal with corruption . . . by radically reducing the inequality and tolerating the private financing or by tolerating the inequality and banning the political use of private money." A decent American democracy clearly needs both to reduce inequality and get the private money out of elections. The two go together because a society that remains free and democratic will never achieve a distribution of wealth so equal and so stable as to make the political use of private money unproblematic.

Leftists of the democratic type share a basic definition of the good society: true equality of opportunity. This presupposes equal access to quality health care, education, affordable housing, jobs, pensions, safety-net programs, a clean environment, and so on. Such a profoundly radical vision assumes a commensurately radical redistribution of wealth and restructuring of the economy.

All the while, people in a true democracy are free to make choices: some will be more interested in earning money than others; some will love running a business, others will want to make art; some will be inclined to save their pennies, others won't; some will succeed in their endeavors, others will fail. A progressive tax system and a strong public sector prevent inequalities from increasing to anything even remotely resembling the indecent levels we have today. Moreover, sharp disparities in wealth won't be passed on from generation to generation. Yet enough inequality will remain to corrupt the political process if campaigns are privately funded.

Barred from fund-raising, will citizens languish at home during campaigns, suffocated by a behemoth state which forbids bake sales? Will grassroots participation dwindle? I think not for several reasons:

First, among the myriad activities that make

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up a campaign, fund-raising is not one of the most enriching in a political sense. This is especially significant if—as Walzer argues—activists spend much of their time and energy raising money. Wouldn't democracy benefit if that time and energy went into analyzing, publicizing, and arguing substantive issues? An hour is better spent defending your candidate's environmental policy than trying to please potential contributors enough to get a few checks. A campaign that organizes five admission-free debates might reach many more citizens than a campaign that turns three of those events into fund-raisers.

Second, once money is no longer a variable in a campaign, other kinds of grassroots activities become crucial. Each candidate has the same funds, so whoever mobilizes more people to put up posters, ring doorbells, and stuff envelopes has an advantage. Finally, who really wants to do grassroots fund-raising anyway? Most folks hate it; many refuse to do it. Campaigns that never ask recruits to make the money pitch might attract more volunteers.

Walzer worries about the people who have no time or energy to work in a campaign. How do they show their strong support beyond a "mere vote"? Many will certainly find themselves with more time or energy during subsequent campaigns. Happily they will live to leaflet another day. Those who are chronically indisposed or unlikely to survive until the next election could at least put in a good word for their candidate to family members and friends. They could also send their checks to an issue organization or charity whose work is compatible with their candidate's views. In the end, I think the benefits of public funding will far outweigh the liabilities.

Moving from utopia to real-time America, Walzer admits that public financing of political campaigns is less of a fantasy than a more equal distribution of wealth. So he supports public funding as a second-best alternative. I believe that all the arguments in favor of public financing in an ideal world make it the best alternative now, too.

Yet even the best alternative brings up both technical questions and an immense political problem. We still have to devise a fair way to distribute public funds and television and radio time among candidates. Not all the people who declare themselves candidates can, or should, get money and media access. What kind of winnowing process will work best? If Congress enacts a new federal campaign law, how will it survive scrutiny by a Supreme Court that equates money spent and free speech? I think we will eventually need to amend the Constitution to allow government to cut off private campaign funds.

The goal is not impossible. A broad grassroots coalition that included labor unions, environmentalists, and some businesses put a referendum in favor of public funding for campaigns on the ballot in Maine in November 1996. The measure passed with a twelve-point margin. Legislation limiting private funds is making headway in sixteen other states. This nationwide reform effort deserves the left's time, energy, and even enthusiasm. The moment has come for bonfires and parades.

Michael Merrill

There are three serious flaws in all the current proposals for campaign finance reform. First, none of them will redress the growing crisis of political representation that leaves most poor and working Americans without an adequate voice in the country's governance. Second, many of them include restrictions on how people can participate in the political system—restrictions that undermine the democracy they are supposedly designed to help save. And, finally, they all require the assent of Congress, or some other group of sitting politicians who, among all the people in the nation, have the least interest in changing the system.

The crisis of political representation is the cumulative effect of many factors. The corrupt-

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ing influence of money on the political process has a part to play, but it is by no means the lead. After all, corruption has been a persistent concern to democrats since the beginning of the republic and yet for the most part each generation has somehow managed to muddle its way forward to a more democratic and more inclusive political system. Today's crisis of representation runs deeper than money.

First, the continuing growth of the population and of the scale of government has increased the required span of political representation to the point of overload—the ratio of voters to elected representatives in the United States is among the highest in the world. There is no way that U.S. elected officials can attend to the concerns of everyone they are supposed to represent. Naturally enough, the politicians represent the interests they know, and those excluded from the informal mechanisms that determine who gets listened to rightly feel betrayed and abandoned.

Second, most Americans are still not equal before the law. Wage earners, for example, are routinely denied rights to freedom of association and free speech on the job that wealth holders take for granted. The fact that most of the money in politics comes from wealth holders and not from wage earners helps to explain why this inequality persists, but it is not the only nor even the most important explanation. Restricting the flow of political contributions or financing political campaigns with tax dollars will not ensure wage earners the equal protection of the law.

Finally, the rise of broadcast campaigning and celebrity politics has broken the institutional ties that once bound candidates to constituents in the established mass parties. Historically, political parties have depended on their grassroots membership to get out the vote much more than they do now. Elected officials and party leaders had to be much more directly responsive to the felt needs and interests of that membership. Money was still important. But there was no effective way to appeal over the heads of precinct leaders to the voters themselves. Local party structures helped ordinary Americans feel much more connected to the political system than all the focus groups, talk shows, and town meetings now do—even though it may be the case that modern methods of polling give party leaders a much more nuanced view of public opinion.

Most voters now feel like little more than consumers in a political marketplace, and consumer sovereignty is a feeble lever where the range of goods over which it is exercised is limited. The economy accommodates this weakness by elaborating niches where consumers can express their preferences regardless of what everyone else is doing. But the structure of political representation and choice in the United States presents voters with a very limited range of options that leaves them feeling powerless and unrepresented.

None of the proposals for campaign finance reform addresses any of these problems. They will not alter the structure of representation, ensure equality before the law, or change the balance of power between incumbent politicians and the electorate. So what to do? Changing the way campaigns are financed is neither sufficient nor even, most likely, necessary. What we need are fairer, more open, and more freewheeling political campaigns—ways of ensuring a larger measure of public discussion and genuine political debate—without having to depend upon the incumbents themselves to give it to us.

There are hopeful signs. The print media do a pretty good job of informing the active reading public and encouraging genuine political debate. And even the broadcast media are getting better at providing the public with what they need to know. During the last campaign, television, radio, and on-line services offered access to a wide range of information about the various candidates and their positions. Too much of this information, however, was produced by the candidates themselves—or their consultants—and was, to say the least, self-serving. Most journalists, perhaps for obvious reasons, still preferred to act as if the campaign were something separate from themselves—something they simply needed to report rather than something they had to produce. Fortunately or unfortunately, this is simply no longer the case—as the 1996 Republican and Democratic conventions both revealed. From the run-up to the first primaries to the wind-down before elec-

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tion day, the last presidential campaign was little more than a series of stage-managed photo opportunities intended to present the candidates talking to the right kinds of people against the most telling backgrounds.

Campaign finance reform won't change the way the politicians conduct their campaigns. It will only change who pays for them. To change the way campaigns are conducted we have to put someone else in charge of producing them. We don't need to take either money or the special interests out of politics. We need to get citizens and the public interest back in it again. The way to do that is for the grant-givers, reformers, pundits, and ex-office holders who claim to care about such things to put their energies and resources where their mouth is and create a nonprofit educational corporation—let's call it "The Real Campaign 2000"—that would immediately set about organizing the events of the next campaign to ensure the most open, the most free-ranging, the most probing discussion possible of all the candidates and issues. Raise the money. (All contributions would be tax deductible.) Get the airtime. (The networks might even be convinced to make airtime available at bargain basement rates in return for a greater role in deciding the content of the actual programming.) Start the discussion. (We don't have to wait for congressional approval.) If the media buy is large enough, the candidates will participate, if only to secure the free publicity or to forestall their opponents from getting a leg up on them.

In effect, Real Campaign 2000 would function as the party of all parties, the guarantor of the electoral process as a whole, a new informal fourth branch of government. It would not run candidates, though it would have to establish some threshold rules to determine who gets airtime and who doesn't. Its mission would be to provide every candidate, of whatever party, a chance to state his or her case to the public. And the larger the effort, the more leverage the organizers will have in setting the ground rules. Such leverage is important if Real Campaign 2000 is not to be hostage to incumbents. The goal of an open, freewheeling, genuinely democratic campaign is to make incumbency as insecure and as exposed as possible. The point is

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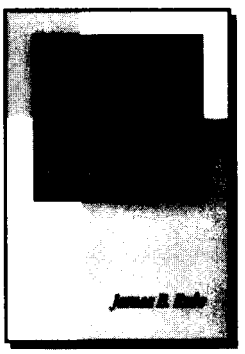

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not to elect particular people to office, but to make sure that the electorate knows whether those elected actually did what they said they'd do and, if not, give it a chance to know why—so that it can hold the candidates accountable.

Is such a thing feasible? I don't see why not. Indeed, it is little more than the logical extension of recent trends. Since the political parties have started producing media events, it seems perfectly fitting for the media to start producing political events. And since the media love a good argument much more than a sitting politician does, they are much more likely to produce political events that might actually restore serious debate and discussion to the process. Doing it on a nonprofit basis might make it easier to raise the money to finance the effort. But a case could also be made that the networks would make a profit on the whole thing. After all, people are much more likely to tune into something where the outcome is undetermined, and advertisers love an audience. Moreover, if we can't change the way campaigns are conducted, I say let the special interests pay for them. In a few more years, nobody is going to be paying attention anyway.

James B. Rule

Generating political action from private resources poses some sticky problems for the democratic left. We value grassroots political action—so we like the idea of electoral campaigns and other forms of politicking as populist, participatory activities. But we also deplore the massive inequalities of American society—inequalities of wealth, and hence of all the things that money can buy. In America, that is a lot of things, and political results are obviously among them. Often it looks as though the values of participatory politics and those of creating a level political playing field run in a collision course.

But in fact, the choices are not so stark. One can imagine many innovative arrangements that would countervail against the corrupting role of money in political campaigns, while actually enhancing popular participation.

Contests over the role of money in these settings are largely struggles over *information*—conflicts about what information will be accessible to the public, when, how, and under what auspices. Money would not matter nearly so much in American politics if there were alternatives to high-priced media time as means for conveying information to citizens. The "free market" now prevailing in public communications favors those with the big bucks required to monopolize public attention. The problem is to break that monopoly.

As in many another domain, the "freedom" afforded by today's markets in public communication is spurious. But these markets are not part of some natural order of things. With the right political will, legislation could foster new, and vastly more democratic, markets of political ideas.

Consider the presidential primaries. Here the distorting role of big money is widely acknowledged. Campaigns are wastefully long. Worse, the political possibilities presented to most of the nation's voters are apt to be determined by which candidate can accumulate the biggest bankroll for the February contest in the tiny and atypical state of New Hampshire. By the time most voters get to express their wishes (if indeed they ever do) the terms of public debate will likely have been set by whoever succeeds in establishing early "momentum" in this special contest.

But imagine a radically different set of ground rules for presidential nominations—a two-stage, nationwide primary system. Funding for participation in this primary would be limited to contributions from individual citizens—excluding businesses and all other organizations—with a

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strict maximum of $1,000 per contributor. Other donations could consist only of citizens' labors. Government subsidies, if permitted, would be in direct proportion to these private contributions.

Note the far-reaching significance of limiting campaign funds to *individual* contributions. A step like this would obviously curtail the political clout of America's most powerful institutions—General Motors, the American Medical Association, the National Rifle Association, and so on. But it would also exclude institutional contributions from the AFL-CIO, the Sierra Club, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving—in short, it would smite the wicked and the righteous with the same sword. The ability of organizations *as organizations* to amass and target financial resources would count for much less—while their ability to inspire their members' active participation would suddenly count for a great deal.

The first of the two ballots in the national primary would be open to a wide variety of candidates—say, to anyone who could amass several hundred thousand voters' signatures collected from anywhere in the country. Candidates would thus presumably range from established professional politicians to leaders of sundry minorities endowed with the determination and donated labor necessary to collect the necessary signatures.

Next, consider a radically new *informational* context for these campaigns. All candidates would be expected to make a basic campaign speech, which would be widely diffused by television and radio (on time furnished in the public interest by all holders of broadcast licenses), as well as print and videotape. Further campaign materials would be prepared at the expense of the campaigns, but disseminated at public expense via libraries, post offices, and the World Wide Web. Candidates would be free to hold public rallies, kiss babies, be interviewed by independent journalists, or engage in any number of other participatory activities available to them today. But they would *not* legally be able to purchase airtime or other forms of publicity beyond that afforded by the budget constraints noted above.

The second phase of the national primaries would be a runoff for those finishing at the top of the first poll. Here new speeches would be solicited and disseminated, and new campaign materials generated. There might be officially sponsored debates—aired again at public expense. As in the first phase, journalistic activity and public rallies would help spread candidates' messages. But the same rigorous limits on cash contributions noted above would apply. The fact that each phase of the campaign involved the entire country at once (rather than just one or a few states at a time) would focus public attention dramatically. And the time required for the entire process could be greatly condensed.

Such innovations would enhance both the interplay of ideas and the dynamism of political participation in the nominating process. Instituting the principles described here would eliminate the advantages of money contributions from single sources—and create strong incentives to broaden the base of political campaigns. Instead of competing to woo big donors, and thereby to dominate the air waves, candidates would be compelled to put their "best shot" in a limited number of campaign communications. In all these matters, having a lot of committed supporters would count for a great deal; access to fat cats and monied interests would count for virtually nothing.

One could (and should) entertain all sorts of tinkering with the details envisaged here. My point is the *kind* of changes required, rather than any version of the fine detail. We urgently need to start considering substitutes for the arrangements that now in effect put the attention of the public up for bid—and which degrade the quality of public discourse in the process.

Needless to say, a proposal like this will not be implemented in the United States, or even widely discussed, any time soon. Those who control our national political life have gained their ascendancy by manipulating the very options that would be curtailed in this plan. They will not willingly yield their advantage to any such populist scheme as this.

Thus my proposal aims to be radical in the best sense of that term—pointing to democratic possibilities that are well removed from current reality, yet eminently feasible. □

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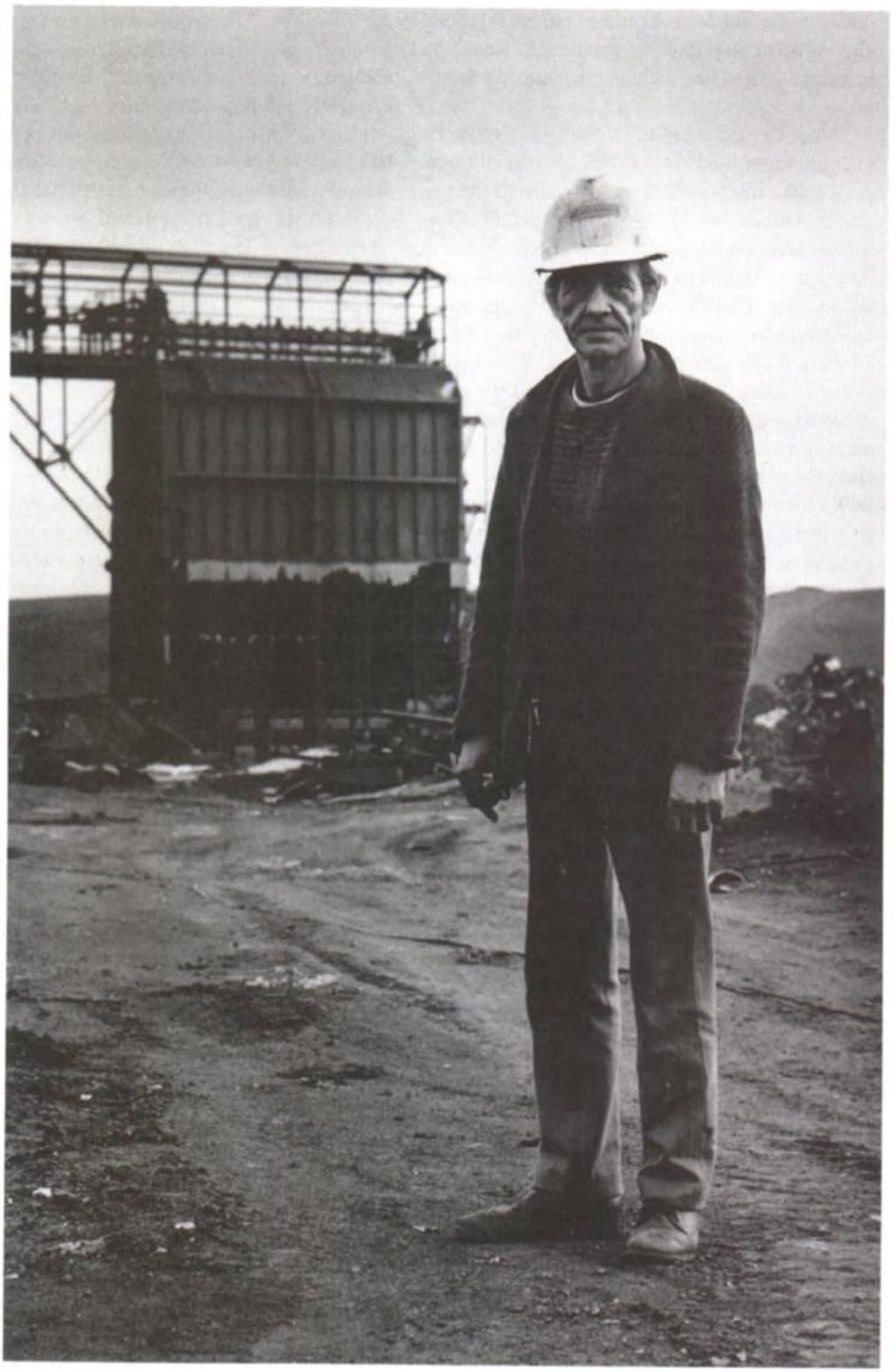

Demolition worker at the closed Glasshoughton Colliery in South York. Raissa Page/IMPACT VISUALS

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Alan Ryan

NEW LABOUR—NEW START?

The extraordinary thing about the Labour landslide on May 1 was that it was utterly predictable and utterly unexpected. Because Britain had been forced to retreat ignominiously from the exchange rate mechanism of the European Community in September 1992—devaluing the pound by 20 percent and giving George Soros the easiest $1.5 billion a currency speculator has ever earned—John Major's Conservative government had been 20 percent behind Labour in every opinion poll. Major's victory in April 1992 was not the stunning upset that it has been portrayed as ever since; Labour had never had a lead of more than 3 or 4 percent in the months before the election, and it had been visibly slipping in the run-up to the election. Still, Labour supporters came to believe that the party's ability to lose elections against all the odds was matched by the Tories' ability to win them. John Major allowed himself the longest campaign in history by setting polling date as late as he constitutionally could and ending the final session of Parliament three weeks sooner than he had to, and even the coolest heads wondered whether the Labour party would not find some new form of self-destruction in the longest (and most boring) six weeks in recent British politics.

Of course, it turned out that the Conservatives had nothing in the armory. It was they who went in for self-destruction, with daily quarrels over the party's attitude towards monetary union in particular and the European Union (EU) in general. Whether it would have done them any good to have got their message out more clearly is anyone's guess. Much like the Republicans faced with Clinton's opportunistic seizure of "their" issues, the Conservative campaign seemed to be saying that the Labour party had stolen the Tory party's policies—and they would not work! The truth was that the population was sick of Conservative governments. Even Conservative voters were sick of Conservative governments. Indeed, many Conservative voters appeared to be more sick of their own party's over-long monopoly of power than were their nominal opponents. "What the party needs is a bracing spell on the opposition benches" became a sort of mantra in what until May 1 had been safe Tory seats. Part of the sentiment was disgust at the dissension over Europe; more of it was disgust at the number of Tory members of Parliament who were involved in one form of scandal or another—being found in bed with teenage "hostesses" and "models" or turning out to have accepted substantial sums of money from insalubrious businessmen in return for political favors.

But until it all happened, nobody believed it would. Labour party officials genuinely believed that they would win with a small majority. The electorate at large never quite believed themselves capable of causing an earthquake. The morning of May 2 saw the British population grinning from ear to ear; it was as though they had meant to be shot of the Conservatives in 1992, had failed, had wondered if it could be done, and now saw they had done it in spades. It was, on the face of it, an odd reaction. For the Labour party campaign had been exceedingly efficient, but at the same time cautious to a fault. The Labour leadership had been convinced that what undid Neil Kinnock in 1992 was a combination of a certain over-exuberance on his side

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and the cleverness of the Conservatives in painting Labour as financially profligate. It was certainly true that the 1992 Labour party had been somewhat slapdash in setting out its tax policies and lax in costing its public expenditure commitments. Its proposals for changing social security deductions and increasing tax rates on higher incomes would have meant a 10 percent increase in taxes for people barely above the average wage, and 20 percent plus for people earning no more than the equivalent of $60,000 or $70,000 a year.

This time, soon-to-be Chancellor of the ExchequerGordon Brown tied his own hands, ostentatiously and publicly, and months ahead of the election. There would be no increase in the rates of personal income tax, even on incomes above the equivlent of $160,000; moreover, any new Labour government was going to live within the expenditure limits already set by the existing Conservative administration. Since everyone assumed that the Conservative government could not live within its own limits, and that it had massaged the figures ahead of the election, Brown's pledge was dramatic stuff. How he could do any of the things the Labour party was committed to—smaller classes in elementary school, a program to get as many young people as possible off the welfare rolls and into jobs, community development schemes to reduce the amount of crime and general antisocial behavior in the big public housing projects that are such a feature of Britain's decaying inner cities—if he had only the resources that a Conservative government was willing to spend? This was before one started asking awkward questions about the condition of the National Health Service, where a million patients wait for treatment, and up to a third of the "trusts" that run Britain's hospitals, ambulance services, outpatient treatment, and indeed almost everything other than primary physician care, were forecasting financial doom.

The Conservatives tried their best to argue that the Labour program did not add up. Sometimes, they said it was £6 billion short and sometimes £12 billion. The public paid no attention. Utter incompetence had discredited the government. This was itself somewhat odd. The conventional wisdom used to be that any British government that could manufacture falling unemployment, rising wages, and reasonably stable prices for about six months before the election would see itself safely back in power. Kenneth Clarke, the genial, beer-drinking, cosmopolitan chancellor of the exchequer, seemed genuinely surprised at the absence of the "feel-good" factor on which he and John Major were banking. Most observers were surprised. Ordinarily, the British electorate is skeptical but forgiving—they appear to expect politicians to heat up the economy before an election and to throw cold water on it immediately afterward, but vote for them nonetheless. This time, they would not do it. They wanted the Conservative government out. Much has been made of the fact that Tony Blair won a crushing victory with only 43 percent of the vote. When that kind of comment comes from a Conservative politician or newspaper, one can decently laugh—since Margaret Thatcher never got more than 43 percent of the vote in any of her supposedly smashing victories, and rather little was heard of the fact then. More interesting on this occasion was that the 43 percent was merely part of an anti-Tory vote. This was not a case of the Labour party sneaking through the middle between two anti-Labour parties in the way the Conservatives had sneaked between Labour and the Liberal-Democrats. The electorate had mastered the art of tactical voting, and they made their votes count. Where a Liberal-Democrat had the best chance of unseating an incumbent Conservative, as in Oxford, the Labour vote shrank or barely rose, and the anti-Conservative vote went to the Liberal-Democrats. Their share of the popular vote hardly rose from what they had got in 1992, but it gave them forty-six seats rather than eighteen. Many disaffected Conservative voters stayed at home. Something like two million fewer voters turned out than in 1992, and that was just about the losing margin.

So, everyone woke up after a long night waiting for the returns, astonished at having done what the electoral system seemed to make it impossible to do. But they also woke up to a government that was deeply committed to being "New Labour" as distinct from "Unrecon-

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structed Old Left," or whatever such slogans have in mind. The far left had been seen off a very long time ago; Neil Kinnock had patiently destroyed the Trotskyites of the Militant Tendency in the late eighties. After Kinnock lost the 1992 election and resigned the leadership, his successor, John Smith, worked to persuade the party that it could not win by being unsound on taxation, inflation, and public expenditure. That left two things untouched. The first was the party's relationship to the trade unions, the second its ideas on a whole range of constitutional and civil liberties issues. In terms of winning elections, the first always was the more important. Since the winter of 1979, when a long string of strikes by public workers destroyed the Labour government of James Callaghan and let Margaret Thatcher start her eleven-year reign, it has been apparent that "Who rules Britain?" is a powerful question; and that the answer had better not be "organized labor."

The youngest voters this year were born during the famous "winter of discontent," and this was an important milestone. It meant that much of the electorate had no memory of the famous scenes of militant grave diggers turning away grieving families who had come to bury their loved ones in the municipal cemetery or of the impressive mountains of black plastic trash-bags that piled up in the streets of London and other major cities. But the unions themselves had decided that it was better to have some influence on a Labour government they could not control than to be permanently excluded from Conservative governments they could not even influence. The Labour party's constitution had already changed in such a way as to limit the formal influence of the unions in such matters as electing the leader. Now, informally, the unions preserved an astonishing silence not only during the election but for months before. Once again, the Conservatives tried to terrify the voters with old newsreel clips of the 1979 garbage mountains, but they failed. Threats of the bill that the unions would surely be presenting for their silence during the election failed to stir the electorate. One far left member of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) played into the hands of Tony Blair and the future minister of education, David Blunkett; at the union's annual conference she made the sort of speech she might have made in 1968, demanding that a Labour government should sack the head of the schools inspection service—Blunkett having announced some weeks before that he would do no such thing. A blast of frigid air swept out of Labour headquarters: cooperation from the NUT would be welcome, but attempts to dictate policy would be stamped on. "Labour Snubs Union," said all the headlines. The electorate continued to give Labour the wide lead it enjoyed throughout.

Oddly, the history of Labour governments since 1945 suggests that with the exception of the Attlee government of 1945-1951, which faced enormous economic difficulties and tackled them with considerable success, Labour has been no more competent than the Tories in matters of economic management, but has been distinctly more enlightened on civil liberties issues, and issues of humanizing government. Not always: they have been no braver than successive Conservative administrations on immigration and race relations; and there is no sign that Jack Straw, the new home secretary, intends to be a model of liberalism. He is as happy as his Conservative predecessor Michael Howard to see children tried in adult courts and as ready as any Republican mayor to impose curfews on teenagers.

Still, this is the party that abolished the death penalty, liberalized the abortion laws, and decriminalized homosexual behavior between consenting adults. Roy Jenkins was an extremely good chancellor of the exchequer, who rescued the British economy during the late nineteen-sixties; but his claim to fame is his work as the home secretary who persuaded the British that they did not need to persecute gays or hang murderers to feel secure. There is a sporting chance that the new Labour government will turn out to be a great reforming government almost in spite of itself. It is about to "incorporate" the European Convention on Human Rights, which is to say that the convention will now become British law, and will govern the decisions of British judges. Until now, plaintiffs who believe that their human rights have been violated have had to exhaust the resources of the British legal system, and only then ap-

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peal to the European Court of Justice to provide remedies that the British system could not. Unsurprisingly, the British government has the worst record of any European state in cases taken to the Court in Strasbourg. Incorporation is not quite the same thing as creating a British Bill of Rights, but it comes close. It provides for positive rights of privacy, respect for family integrity, freedom of movement, and much else. What it lacks is the absoluteness of the American Bill of Rights: like all European codes, it allows governments to breach its provisions for the sake of security and "public morality." It does, for all that, place the onus on governments to prove that their restrictions are justified under fairly narrow headings. A freedom of information act is promised for the further future, and a privacy act that will allow individuals to sue intrusive newspapers—and allow newspapers a "public interest" defense so that politicians aren't protected from proper scrutiny.

Until now, British governments—even Labour governments—have been reluctant to see the courts acquire the authority to invalidate legislation as they will now be able to. But the new Labour government promises to give away more of its powers than that. For a very long time, it has seemed clear that some degree of federalism is politically necessary. The Welsh and the Scots are not only disaffected from the Conservative party but from the whole idea of centralizing power in London. What will emerge when the government offers the population of all of Britain the chance to say yes or no to some concrete proposal for a large measure of home rule is anybody's guess—but it marks the biggest constitutional change for some centuries. Throw in the promise to abolish the voting rights of hereditary peers in the House of Lords and the promise of a referendum on proportional representation, and you have a government whose caution on the economic front is matched by something close to recklessness on the constitutional front.

How much all this will do for Labour's traditional supporters is very hard to tell. Over the past twenty years Britain has followed an economic path similar to that of the United States. The best-off 20 percent of the population have seen their incomes rise by 60 percent, and the worst-off 20 percent have seen theirs fall slightly. The increase in inequality has slowed in the past couple of years, but Britain is now a member of the "forty, forty, twenty" club—40 percent of the population are securely employed and prosperous, 40 percent are employed but struggling, and the bottom 20 percent are only intermittently employed and utterly dependent on the welfare system. Even as the unemployment rate has dropped to a little over 5 percent, the proportion of households with nobody working has risen nearer to one in five. Curing that pathology is the real task for the new government. How it is to accomplish it is what nobody yet knows. The first bold gesture, made by Gordon Brown as soon as he arrived at the Treasury, was to hand back to the Bank of England the power to set interest rates and so determine the level of economic activity. It seemed an odd way to start on a program that needs more rather than less government influence over the economy. Even in these first, heady weeks, it is hard to believe that New Labour has found a magic formula that will somehow transform a new "hands-off" approach to economic management into a peculiarly sophisticated form of late-twentieth-century socialism. □

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Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom

DISTORTIONS IN THE CHINA DEBATE

American discussions of the People's Republic of China (PRC) have been distorted by two inter-related developments: (1) attempts by some of the most vocal supporters and critics of Clinton's approach to China, as well as the mainstream media covering their interchanges, to reduce complex choices to simple binary oppositions, and (2) moves by an odd alliance of former cold war hawks and people whose political affiliations are much harder to categorize (some tend toward the left on many issues) to convince us that the Beijing regime is as bad as any that has existed in modern times, and that anything short of an unqualified hard line toward it amounts to a willingness to "coddle" tyrants. Both of these should be a cause for concern to readers of *Dissent*. They hinder public understanding of a major foreign power. They make it harder than it already was (and it has never been easy) to think through how people who view themselves as part of the independent "left" (as defined by Mitchell Cohen in the Spring *Dissent*) should respond to a changing China. And, they make it more difficult than it should be to design government approaches to the PRC that are more effective than those of the Clinton administration.

It is foolish to imagine that the only way to come down on policy issues is either to embrace the soft line being pursued by the administration (and apparently supported as well by a few Republican luminaries, including Henry Kissinger and now Newt Gingrich) or to advocate the much harder line supported by the White House's most virulent critics. After all, it is possible to view favorably some things Clinton has done (moving toward a resumption of high-level exchanges) while remaining critical of others (treating Jiang Zemin so cordially in Manila last fall, just after a new campaign of repression had been launched).

It is equally foolish to imagine that there are only two types of China experts: those who think economic development will magically turn the PRC into a liberal democracy and those who view China as an increasingly powerful but otherwise unchanging totalitarian state, shaped by the same dangerous mixture of indigenous despotic traditions, imported Marxist-Leninist ideas, and nationalistic dreams that fueled high Maoism. There are many academic China specialists (myself included) who are deeply skeptical of the business lobby's claims about the natural link between free trade and democratization, yet still think that the PRC is currently weaker and its future more uncertain than those who warn of a mounting "China Threat" insist. Some of us are convinced that the PRC has changed and continues to change in fundamental ways, and that the quality of life of many ordinary Chinese was improved in the Maoist and Dengist eras—yet still find much to criticize about how the country was run in both periods, as well as how it is governed today.

You would never know that intermediate positions, complex questions, or ambiguous feelings about the accomplishments and social costs of revolution and reform could even exist, however, if you paid attention only to the voices shouting loudest and being amplified most effectively in the mainstream media. The press has divided up policies and experts into dichotomous piles, and now seems incapable of considering the border areas lying betwixt and between.

The second worrisome tendency, which helps

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drive the binary framing of the China debate, involves the demonization of the current regime. In its more restrained manifestations, such as in a much discussed book entitled *The Coming Conflict with China*, this trend simply distorts our understanding of an important issue. In its more unbridled forms, such as sensationalist magazine covers that use graphics and text to try to convince us of the magnitude of the Chinese menace, it goes beyond this—it breathes new life into old images of the Yellow Peril that should by now be dead and buried. The cover of the March 10 issue of the *New Republic*, which showed a fierce dragon crushing people beneath its talons while being supplicated by Uncle Sam, was bad enough. Still more disturbing was the cover of the March 24 issue of *National Review*, which dubbed the president a "Manchurian Candidate" and included racist caricatures of Al Gore and both the Clintons, complete with slanted eyes and stereotypically Asian garb.

Where did these two trends come from, and how exactly have they been distorting the China debate? A fanciful, but nonetheless effective, point of departure for taking up these issues is provided by the recent re-release of three films. There is a long tradition among China watchers of using Hollywood movies to probe popular understanding or misunderstanding of the Chinese. In the late 1950s, for example, in his classic study *Scratches on Our Minds: American Views of China and India*, Harold R. Isaacs explored the cinematic portrayals of the Chinese, in romanticized films such as *The Good Earth* and demonizing movies such as the *Fu Manchu* serials, to drive home his point about the bipolar nature of American opinions. According to Isaacs, we have often swung between viewing the Chinese as simple people just waiting to be converted to our ways and start buying our goods, on the one hand, and seeing them as members of a despotic culture prone to unspeakable acts of savagery, on the other. Though much that Isaacs said still rings true, my use of cinematic allusions is different from his, because the films that I want to talk about have nothing to do with China; they are rather the *Star Wars* movies of George Lucas.

Darth Vader and the Demonization of China

It is worth remembering that when these films devoted to epic struggles between good and evil first opened in theaters two decades ago, American moviegoers had worldviews structured around cold war polarities. Many found it natural, therefore, to equate the heroic "Rebels" with the Free World alliance led by the United States, and to see in the tyrants of the "Dark Side" sci-fi counterparts to the Soviet leaders. Just to make sure that the public made these connections, Ronald Reagan and others on the right took to calling the U.S.S.R. the "Evil Empire" and hailing the need for a "Star Wars" defense system.

When the trilogy returned to the theaters earlier this year, audiences were living in a changed world. It was unclear whether, in this post-cold war environment, there would be any kind of consensus, even among conservatives, about the contemporary power that new generations of viewers should be encouraged to identify with the Evil Empire of the films. It seemed possible to speculate, in fact, that if there was a new consensus, it might be that there was no longer any totalitarian regime that could aptly be described as representing the special threat to U.S. interests and world peace that earlier generations of Americans had associated first with the Axis powers and then the Soviet Union. Have we finally entered an epoch in which there is no terrestrial regime that is viewed as being as dangerous as the extraterrestrial one of Darth Vader?

This question remains an open one, but a concerted effort is being made by influential American pundits and politicians to convince us that China fits the bill, and in doing so they have demonstrated a fondness for linking the current leaders of the PRC to everyone from Genghis Khan and Fu Manchu to Hitler and Stalin. Presenting their view as the only serious alternative to the kind of "constructive engagement," with little talk of such messy issues as human rights, that is being advocated by pro-China business interests and the political establishment—an approach that the new demonizers brand "appeasement"—these touters of the "China Threat" have been making their presence felt for some time now. A year ago, for example, some Republicans

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in Congress tried to convince us that aborted human fetuses were routinely sold for food in the PRC. Then, during the presidential campaign last fall, Abe Rosenthal used his *New York Times* columns to invoke memories of Hitler, lambasting both Clinton and Dole for behaving like "Chamberlains" instead of "Churchills" toward the PRC, while other writers called for cold war "containment" strategies.

The demonizing trend has definitely intensified in recent months. Not only have prominent pundits such as George Will jumped on the bandwagon, but contributors to special China Threat issues of periodicals, such as the February 24 edition of the *Weekly Standard*, have even begun making explicit references to the PRC as a new "Evil Empire" to be feared and resisted. Growing concern about the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong and domestic scandals associated with Asian and Asian-American campaign contributions are but two of many factors that have added new polemical force to the demonization of China and the reproduction of the old binary opposition. Take, for example, the China issue of the *Weekly Standard*. In it we find Congressman Chris Smith characterizing the "fundamental basis of the disagreement" in the United States on Sino-American relations as a simple division between those foolish enough to think that "the men who rule China are more like businessmen," and those sensible enough to realize that "they are more like Nazis." Others draw lines between those who do and do not take seriously the rising tide of Chinese nationalism and those who are and are not willing to "sell out" the cause of dissidents "in order to sell a few more Big Macs." Contributors to recent issues of the *New Republic* have also invoked related binary oppositions. In the March 10 issue, one contributor says that Chinese-Americans fall into two basic camps: some care about human rights and side with dissidents such as Harry Wu, who wants a "Holocaust museum-style memorial" built to honor those incarcerated in PRC labor camps; others focus only on business and call for a soft line toward Beijing. The April 21 issue suggests in its cover story that there are only two types of experts: a majority who mistakenly claim that "China is marching toward democracy" and a minority who realize that the country is still in the grips of a crippling form of totalitarianism.

One of the most interesting illustrations of how complexities are reduced to simple oppositions by the new demonizers, as well as of how familiar divisions between the "left" and the "right" are often muddied, is provided by *The Coming Conflict with China*. Written by a pair of former *Time* magazine Asia bureau chiefs, Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, who are represented in the February 24 issue of the *Weekly Standard* by an essay entitled "PLA Incorporated," this book is a mixture of careful and even at times insightful commentary, interesting but sensationalized detail, and alarmist analysis. For our purposes, what is most interesting about it is the claim that China experts can be divided up into two basic groups.

The first type of specialists, according to Bernstein and Munro, can all be classed as belonging to the New China Lobby, a catch-all for academics and nonacademics who minimize the threat to American interests of the PRC and downplay the value of pushing hard on human rights issues. Some of the people in this group are so naive as to believe economic development always leads to democracy and freedom. Others, such as the Democratic and Republican former policy makers turned businesspeople and consultants belonging to the Kissinger Associates firm, who have large investments in China to protect and clients with even larger stakes in the Chinese market, are motivated by a less naive belief: namely, that engagement means profits. Still others are part of a small band of unnamed "senior scholars of China" who "write useful articles on Chinese politics," in part because they are able to "maintain excellent contacts" with top leaders, but know that in order to gain the access on which they depend they must "remain silent" or "flatter" the regime on "certain subjects," such as human rights and Tibet.

The specialists described by Bernstein and Munro as being on the opposite side of the fence from The New China Lobby are the small handful of journalists and academics who have been denied permission to go to or at least had trouble getting visas for the PRC. *Coming Conflict* suggests that, if we want to find people whose opin-

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ions about Beijing can be trusted, we should look to the members of this politically eclectic group, which includes both Ross Terrill (who had an article on Deng's death in the *National Review* issue with the racist cover) and Orville Schell (whose pieces appear in the *Nation* from time to time). Interestingly, in a recent *New York Review of Books* essay on *Coming Conflict*, Jonathan Mirsky (a journalist who has had some trouble of his own getting into China lately) uses a similar criterion for supporting his claim that Bernstein and Munro deserve to be believed: he cites as evidence that their argument about the PRC has struck home the fact that the official *Xinhua* news agency has denounced it as "racist" scribbling that supports the assertion of American "hegemony" in Asia.

Beyond the Binaries

There are all sorts of problems with the dichotomies. Most generally, they create yet another situation in which American foreign policy is tossed between the Scylla of condescending romanticization and the Charybdis of dehumanizing demonization—perils that Isaacs described so well in his discussion of *Good Earth* and *Fu Manchu* imagery. As in the past, the option of treating China as an equal power with which the United States has very serious areas of disagreement is given short shrift.

It is very difficult for academic China specialists (including this author)—who have neither business investments nor top level contacts in the PRC, yet have not had trouble getting visas despite speaking out against things the Beijing regime has done—to be heard in the current debate or even to find a place from which to speak. We are not included when commentators divide the experts into two groups, since many of us have been bitterly disappointed by some of Beijing's actions, but also believe that it is misleading to describe the current Chinese regime as analogous to that of Hitler or Stalin. On the one hand, we do not believe that the business lobbyists are right when they insist that investment and industrialization always lead to freedom— Singapore and other cases suggest that authoritarianism and development can go hand in hand. In fact, one thing that worries us about contemporary China is the suffering produced by the increasing inequalities of wealth and reconfigurations of patriarchy that are in part *results* of economic growth. On the other hand, we do not think it makes sense to present China as an unchanging despotism, because much has been changing in the PRC, for the better as well as the worse.

Another basic factual problem with the binary oppositions is that they minimize the range of opinions expressed by the Chinese themselves and the complexity of the developments occurring in China these days. How can one speak blithely of being for or against "the dissidents," when there are important divisions within that group on many issues, including the policies the people and government of the United States should follow in regard to China? Harry Wu, a former resident of the gulag, may call for both a hard line and consumer boycotts of goods produced by prison labor, but the recently reimprisoned Wang Dan has argued strongly for the desirability of foreign powers engaging with rather than trying to isolate the Beijing authorities. I am not sure how Wang Dan stands on consumer boycotts, but there are probably people within the dissident community who are in favor of these yet approve of the Clinton line toward China, as well as some who are critical of the administration's approach to the PRC yet do not think consumer boycotts appropriate. Similarly, when it comes to nationalism, there are dissidents (such as Liu Xiaobo) who have continued to use, and other dissidents (such as Fang Lizhi) who have sought to distance themselves from, the symbolism of *jiuguo* (national salvation)—in both cases because they know that notions of patriotic renewal played a key role in the protests of 1989 yet were also invoked by the government to defend the massacres that put an end to that struggle. Finally, recent statements by the Dalai Lama indicate that, in contrast to the new demonizers, he views the current Chinese regime as one that is undergoing important changes that may lead to positive developments.

Clearly, the main thing we should do in order to "side with the dissidents" is to start listening more carefully to the range of their opinions, as well as those of people in China who have been

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taking independent stands on certain issues, while refusing at the same time to sever completely their ties to the regime. One key theme that independent-minded establishment intellectuals and dissidents alike have focused on in recent years is that the current leaders in Beijing are more sensitive to outside influence on some issues than on others. For example, though they remain determined that no political parties able to compete with the Communists should be allowed, and unwilling to entertain any thoughts of freeing Tibet or giving up on reunification with Taiwan, many within the current leadership do seem to care about (being perceived as) moving their country toward the rule of law. This has even allowed some ordinary people and some intellectuals to sue the government for mistreating them (as the controversial muckraking journalist Dai Qing did at one point) without being thrown in jail or killed as one would imagine happening if China was indeed ruled by Darth Vader.

Developments such as these have important implications when it comes to strategies for bringing pressure on Beijing to improve its human rights record. Rather than alternating between presenting the Chinese authorities with laundry lists of abuses and simply being silent on human rights, as recent American administrations have tended to do, it might be helpful for policy makers to draw a distinction between general practices that are part of PRC state policy but with which the American government disagrees (such as the occupation of Tibet) and things that the regime has done that violate China's Constitution (which guarantees a certain amount of free expression, for example) or break promises that have been made to foreigners or Chinese citizens. By concentrating most of their attention on the latter type of abuses, while not ignoring completely the former, U.S. officials might be able to bring some much needed consistency to the human rights dimension of Sino-American relations. Retroactively, this would have meant being more assertive when Wang Dan and Liu Xiaobo were reimprisoned recently for engaging in activities that are supposed to be legally protected in the PRC, but being less energetic (though not silent) when Harry Wu was detained for doing things that may have been admirable but that even he admits involved breaking laws.

With Beijing's many promises to Hong Kong on the line, upcoming debates on most-favored-nation status (MFN) provide particularly appropriate opportunities to send China a message: in order for the United States to take a foreign power seriously in issues of trade or diplomacy, it needs to know that the regime can keep its word. Congress could make it very clear that future extensions of MFN would be linked not to vague and shifting criteria but to the Chinese regime's ability to keep promises, both to the United States and to residents of the PRC. By doing this, the American government would make the point that it prefers to deal with foreign powers on a basis of equality and is ready to move beyond condescending to or demonizing the PRC. But it can do so only if Beijing begins to demonstrate more effectively that it can abide by the rules it makes for itself.

Perhaps the overarching problem with the trend toward framing the debate on China in binary terms is that we are prevented from focusing on the main challenge that lies before all people who want to understand the PRC—the challenge of making sense of a regime that is not like any that has existed before, either in China or elsewhere, and that is undergoing a strange mixture of unprecedented changes. It is difficult but important to figure out how best to think about a Chinese ruling party that is still powerful but battle-scarred, internally divided but unlikely to fall as long as there is no organized opposition to challenge it. We are just not used to thinking realistically about a regime with the following characteristics:

(A) It is based on a Leninist organization that has managed to maintain its monopoly on power despite being beholden to an official ideology that is discredited in the eyes of many, including more than a few top members of the governing elite itself.

(B) It retains its Leninist cast in many matters yet is quite ready to experiment with market reforms and even allow some room for local innovation and experimentation in the political realm, including village elections in which independent candidates more than occasionally win.

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(C) It clings to symbols and rituals developed by charismatic leaders and yet is now headed by very different sorts of people, including some who believe quite sincerely (though often as much for pragmatic as moral reasons) that it is important for China to move toward the rule of law.

(D) It runs an enormous country that is rapidly becoming less cohesive and more decentralized, yet at the very same time is also more fervently nationalistic than ever in certain ways.

What all this means is that, if we want to make sense of China today, we need to think afresh about a country that is transforming itself and being transformed in novel ways. The Chinese regime is not a "Red Dynasty" like an imperial ruling house of old, if for no other reason than that succession issues are settled in radically different ways. The regime is not just like Nazi Germany, if for no other reasons than that Beijing's current leaders are much less popular with the citizens of the PRC than Hitler was with ordinary Germans in the late 1930s and the Chinese Communist party is not trying to exterminate any racial group. The regime is not like that which presided over Russia in the days of Stalin, if for no other reason than that there is a great deal more individual freedom in many aspects of private and public life in the PRC now than ever existed in the Soviet Union, at least before Gorbachev's day. The current regime, finally, is not even like that which ran China during the period of high Maoism, if for no other reason than that it is less committed to the stern ideal of absolute equality—when it singles out people for political persecution, it is not because they were born into the wrong social class.

This is a potentially dangerous time in many areas of world affairs, including that of Sino-American relations. As a result, there is a pressing need to find something better than the scattershot approach to China that has characterized the policies of the last two administrations, each of which has sent Beijing erratic signals and chosen strange times to make gestures of conciliation. When a new approach is needed, as any Hollywood director knows, doctoring old scripts and clinging to the favored imagery of an earlier generation of scriptwriters is not the thing to do. The world of "Star Wars" is a wonderful one to revisit in the theaters, but a dangerous and disturbing one to try to recreate in the real world.

Looking at China from the Left: Where to Go from Here

What might members of an independent left do to aid the rewriting of America's China scripts? This is a hard question to answer succinctly, but a couple of things come to mind. One is to encourage an opening up of the debate on China within the United States by providing forums for dissenting views, where participants could explore new ways of thinking without fear of being typed as alarmist (because, for example, they questioned the natural link between free markets and free elections) or derided as apologists (because, for example, they reminded people that the living conditions of many ordinary Chinese were changed for the better by some of the things that the Communist party did when it took power). Another would be to try harder to listen to the views of Chinese dissidents (both those who have left the PRC and those who have remained behind) and some of the more independent-minded establishment intellectuals as well.

Dissent has already made efforts to do the first of these things. For example, in the journal's Spring 1997 symposium "China and Human Rights," some contributors tried to avoid the trap of reducing the complexities of the issues to simple either/or choices—such as when Margaret O'Brien Steinfels wrote of the fall of the Soviet bloc providing "mixed evidence" about the potential of capitalism to bring liberty in its wake, and when she noted as well the potential value of separating out discussions of how the American government should deal with the Chinese regime and how American consumers might want to respond.

A good next step might be to take up the second proposal: listening more closely to the diversity of Chinese opinion on where the PRC is heading. Looking back again to the Spring issue, there is a model for moving in this direction in the sampling of opinion provided by the three former East European dissidents who (in

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Michael Walzer's words) "have maintained a critical position (or three different critical positions) in the years since 1989." A similar sampling of the Chinese scene, with a variety of contributors weighing in on the kinds of issues raised here (and some important ones mentioned only very briefly in passing, such as the changing nature of gender-based inequalities) would be a welcome addition to a debate that needs to break loose from its old categories and patterns. □

Patricia Cayo Sexton

REMEMBER ALBANIA: A FAIRY TALE

Once upon a time there was a very poor country, tucked away on the Adriatic Sea, called Albania. Many people assumed it was poor because it had been a hard-core communist country, depending on government to regulate corruption and economic affairs. But in fact the benefits of capitalism, individualism, and entrepreneurial skills had penetrated its whole way of life, though not so deeply as they had its ex-communist neighbors.

As a result, there arose in the ranks of new entrepreneurs a man who sold people on the idea that they could make money the easy way, not by working for it but by putting their *money* to work—what little they had. They should invest it, he said, in a big profit-making scheme of his own invention. The people liked the word "profit," they'd heard it was a good thing. So they invested, slowly at first, since it was their first experience with this kind of enterprise. But as they saw others making profits without putting in a day's labor, they plunged en masse toward the promised rewards of his enterprise.

Suddenly, however, a panic swept the nation. The enterprise had collapsed without warning, taking their invested savings with it. Nobody knew what happened to the money. "Who has it? We want it back," they hollered. But the money was gone. "It's the government's fault," they decided. "It should have warned us. Now it's got to get our profits back for us." But the former communists who sat in the state house replied, "We have a new regime here. Things have changed, and we are no longer your daddies. So take care of yourselves." "*Caveat emptor*," they kept shouting at their angry and bewildered pursuers. When this didn't make them shut up, they switched to a magical slogan they'd seen but weren't sure how to pronounce: "*Laissez-faire*!" they shouted. The people stared blankly for a moment, then continued to shout back.

Well, the people, mad as hell, took action. Lacking individualism, they did not take responsibility for their losses and heave their guilty bodies off bridges. Instead, they rose up and with one voice denounced the government, demanded a new one, and told their leaders to get out of town. They rioted, not here and there, but everywhere. Any place you looked, you saw rioting Albanians. For weeks they marched, shouted slogans, struck the nation's plants, closed businesses, and did whatever came to mind to break this regime. But alas, their foe had the force of arms and the backing of allies in what people said was the free world. So the regime stood, and the people fell. The free-world allies held a moment of prayer, and returned to their usual business.

History can note, however—though it won't—that the people of Albania became the only ones in the modern world to wage a near-revolution against *caveat emptor* and *laissez-faire*, even though they had no idea what they meant. Think about it. □

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Román de la Campa

INVESTING IN CUBA

Relations between the United States and Cuba stumble from obsession to obsession. A few years ago, the reigning obsession was the flow of illegal Cuban immigrants to American shores—a flow now stanched by tacit agreement between the two countries. This year's obsession is the Helms-Burton Act, and more generally the single-minded U.S. pursuit of its economic embargo. This country's latter-day anticommunist crusade is not only pushing Cuba to the wall, but also snarling U.S. relations with its closest allies.

The Helms-Burton Act, signed into law by the president during his re-election campaign, aims to block international investment in Cuba. It does this by asserting future rights over any property confiscated by Fidel Castro's regime from corporations and individuals now located in the United States. The list of aggrieved parties is potentially endless—thereby casting serious doubts over the current climate of investment in the island. The law clearly runs counter to the leitmotif of trade liberalization preached so exuberantly by America nearly everywhere else in the world.

Meanwhile, Castro's regime remains caught in its own internal contradictions. Cuba continues to maintain tight internal control, banking on its ability to absorb the social repercussions of the foreign investments that it is now so actively seeking. Will the regime succeed in transforming itself into a Caribbean Singapore or will the shock of foreign capital undermine long-standing political arrangements?

Some strains are already evident. Internal opposition organizations such as the Cuban Council and various groups of independent journalists are seeking reforms, though they have often been met with repression. On the U.S. side, hard-liners in the Cuban-American community push Washington for more severe measures against the regime, even at terrible cost to their compatriots in Cuba. At the same time, many exiles defy Washington's ban against travel to Cuba—not only for personal reasons, but also to invest in small ventures.

But amid all these public gambits, a potentially more important development has passed unnoticed. Immediately after Clinton's second inauguration, the administration launched a new policy trial balloon—a report titled "Support for a Democratic Transition in Cuba." The document presents a scheme for a "transition government" in Cuba, following the model of other former socialist countries. Though the report was produced by the Agency for International Development, its preface carries the signature of President Clinton himself.

News media in the United States have largely ignored the document. Yet it represents the most ambitious public plan produced by any American administration to deal with Castro's regime. It offers an inducement of eight billion dollars in investment funds—if Cuba installs a market-oriented transition government and holds multiparty elections within eighteen months. Neither Fidel nor Raúl Castro, it appears, would be acceptable as part of a transition government. Even so, coming after years of U.S. efforts at the total isolation of Cuba, the plan represents a radical departure.

Some of the immediate reactions have been predictable. Castro accused the United States of trying to buy Cuba. Cuban exiles, on the other hand, have mostly hailed the plan. A third, less transparent response came from Elizardo Sánchez Santa Cruz, director of the Cuban Commission of Human Rights in Havana—a figure who amounts to an officially tolerated thorn in the regime's side. Sánchez Santa Cruz endorsed

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the idea of allowing investments to flow more freely into Cuba, but questioned the requirement of dispensing with the present government prior to any type of transition regime. As one would expect, such a response has made Sánchez Santa Cruz *persona non grata* in Miami—even though he has served more than nine years in Castro's prisons and has recently characterized Cuba's government as both totalitarian and inept.

The document itself abounds—no doubt intentionally—with fascinating and contradictory implications. Consider a few:

(1) It states that the Cuban military apparatus could remain intact during the transition period and beyond. This feature could be understood as an attempt to drive a wedge between the military and the rest of the government. It also represents an acknowledgment that neoliberal reforms have worked quite well in concert with military authoritarianism—as in Peru, Chile, and Argentina.

Still more speculatively, the idea of protecting the position of the Cuban military could also serve to finesse the most ticklish political aspect of the change—by permitting Castro to assume a Pinochet-like role in the transition period. As in Chile, nonmilitary officials close to the current regime might preside over the transitional government. Nothing like this is spelled out, of course, but neither is it excluded. One senses that virtually anything is possible, provided Castro proves willing to define a new role for himself.

(2) The document also bows to Cuba's deep nationalist spirit, which Castro has nurtured so assiduously over the past thirty-eight years. It goes to great lengths to appear sensitive to sovereignty questions that have historically divided Cuba and the United States—calling, for example, for negotiations on a possible return of the Guantanamo base.

On the other hand, the document abounds with stunningly naive—and patently propagandistic—statements about Latin America. Perhaps the most obvious declares that globalization will bring "Cuba into the ranks of prosperous democratic nations, where it will proudly join the other thirty-four countries in the hemisphere."

(3) The statement also offers some tantalizing hints regarding the United States's conflict with Canada and the European Community over Helms-Burton. Part of the eight billion dollar fund offer is meant to address the problem of confiscated property—either through direct payments or "transferable privatization vouchers"—thus resolving doubts that have clouded the investment climate for Canadian and European interests.

One suspects, however, that the plan is designed to leave room for a period of transition in which the most severe aspects of Helms-Burton are cautiously but continuously deferred—thereby providing Euro-Canadian investors room to operate while they pressure Castro for greater reforms. Some recent accommodations between the regimes seem to reflect this same spirit. Clinton's move to allow U.S. news enterprises to set up agencies in Cuba sidesteps some of the Helms-Burton prohibitions. Castro's response to grant permission only to CNN is also a sign of movement.

All in all, "Support for a Democratic Transition in Cuba" offers some beguiling ironies in relation to other aspects of U.S. foreign policy. Cuba is more prepared for foreign capital investments than many former socialist societies of Eastern Europe and Asia. It is, after all, past the initial shock of economic dependency stemming from the demise of the Soviet Union. It has racial divisions, but it is free of ethnic strife. It lacks heavy industry in need of overhaul. Its workforce is more highly educated than most in Latin America. And its health system remains above the norm, though it has been rapidly declining since 1989. Finally, Cuba is accustomed to modern ways. In light of all this, one would imagine that the World Bank and the Clinton administration would come to the same conclusion drawn by investors in Europe and Canada—that Cuba provides the ultimate challenge for free trade.

If capital is indeed to be free to roam the world, why not allow it access to Cuba? It is worth noting the widespread view that Castro's regime will change much sooner by facing the full onslaught of global exposure—that is, without the U.S. embargo. Sánchez Santa Cruz, head of the Human Rights Commission in Cuba, is willing to make that bet, and so are many other Cubans. □

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EUROPEAN CALL FOR A PLURALISTIC CITIZENSHIP AND ECONOMY

Recently, a number of French intellectuals endorsed an appeal urging Europeans to address seriously the negative consequences on social life of neoliberal economic trends. The following is an abridged version of their "Call," translated and edited for a U.S. audience. Signers included Alain Caillé, André Gorz, and Alain Lipietz, among others; the effort was organized by La Revue du MAUSS *and Transversales in Paris.* —EDS.

Everyone sees it: all over Europe, even where the economy is not faring badly, society is falling apart. The social contract of the last fifty years, based on full employment and the welfare state, no longer holds our societies together. The continuing growth of wealth, because it is distributed more and more unequally, is accompanied by social divisions that are becoming intolerable. A first conclusion is inescapable: the policies of the past twenty years, which pinned their hopes on a return to a level of growth sufficient to eliminate unemployment, have failed.

Many factors must obviously be considered in understanding the causes of the mass unemployment plaguing Europe. How much is due to the spread of information technologies, whose productivity gains "free" workers from one sector while preventing them from shifting into another? How much is due to globalization? Or to financial speculation? Finally, how much comes from the timidity of our economic policies and the debt and inflation limits imposed by the Maastricht Treaty? Among the signers of this appeal there are divergent opinions on all these points. But we are united in the conviction that no traditional economic policy can resolve the crisis of work and the exhaustion of the wage society. Neither the "free-market" approach nor the panoply of Keynesian stimulus measures will overcome unemployment or heal the social fractures that are widening everywhere if we do not recognize that Europe has entered a different era from the one that assured its prosperity up to now.

The signers of this appeal—economists, sociologists, journalists, philosophers, and activists—believe that it is urgent to subordinate their differences in order to encourage a debate about how to stimulate innovative economic and social policies. This means reflecting on how to achieve plural forms of economy and democracy, as well as sustainable development. We believe that a novel policy must strengthen democracy, rather than sacrificing it in the name of a technocratic or economic efficiency that usually proves wholly imaginary. And we all agree, albeit with varying emphases, that any democratic economic and social policy seeking to mend the social fabric must explore three interdependent matters:

(1) Reduce work-time, share employment

The average work-week must be shortened. It is also necessary to redistribute work—and the privileges of citizenship that go along with it—across the active population. An arsenal of measures must be deployed toward these ends. Among these are determining what measure of work time should provide entitlement to a continuing income; the introduction, where feasible,

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of a four-day work week; and the encouragement of freely chosen part-time work. In any event, it is important to oppose the coercive imposition of temporary or part-time work as well as the proliferation of intermediate statuses between salaried work and subsidized make-work that fragment the working population.

(2) **A plural, solidaristic economy**

We need to encourage the sort of initiatives, now cropping up all over, that blur established boundaries between economy and society. Alongside traditional jobs in the market sector or in public service, we must promote a third economic sector—what many French authors classify as the "solidaristic economy" [and Americans call the "non-profit sector"—Eds.]. This entails initiatives for public financing of activities that have a high degree of social utility but that cannot develop through market logic. The goal is to promote hybrid forms that combine the private and public economies with the third sector. By ensuring conditions in which each person can engage voluntarily in activities that contribute to the common good, renewed forms of direct democracy can help complete and revivify representative democracy.

(3) **Minimum solidarity incomes without stigma**

Finally, we insist that it is disgraceful when some members of a society are compelled to survive beneath a minimally decent material level. . . . Past experiments in minimum incomes . . . have been unable to link adequately obligations, contracts, and volunteer work . . . and thereby locked beneficiaries into short-term perspectives. The prohibition against combining the minimum income with other sources of income prevented them from seeking a job and keeps them trapped in unemployment.

How can we go beyond current approaches to income maintenance? It is on this question that the signers of this appeal diverge the most. Some are very hesitant about distributing income without work being required in return. Others believe that a new notion of citizenship requires an unconditional minimum income. . . . Yet whatever our long-term differences, all of us concur that in the short run, simple good sense and humanity require an unconditional minimum income for every person who lacks the most basic resources—even if efforts at their social reintegration are not successful. Moreover, they should be allowed to combine this minimum income with other resources, although the latter may be taxed. In any case, it is essential to oppose mandatory work schemes (like workfare), which can only take us back to the nineteenth century, turning society's outcasts into scapegoats.

No serious moral, economic, or financial obstacle prevents us from taking such measures. There is a fear that an unconditional, means-tested minimum income will permit governments to take no further interest in the least advantaged, allotting them a pittance for their survival. This danger should not be underestimated, but it should be resisted by affirming that the minimum income is meaningful only if coupled with the two preceding measures [redistribution of salaried employment and a solidaristic economy—Eds.].

All these measures are immediately realizable—whether from a financial standpoint or a technical, economic, or moral one—provided that they are recognized as urgent priorities. And provided that their close interdependence is grasped. We therefore call for the broadest possible debate throughout the European community concerning the ideas presented here. □

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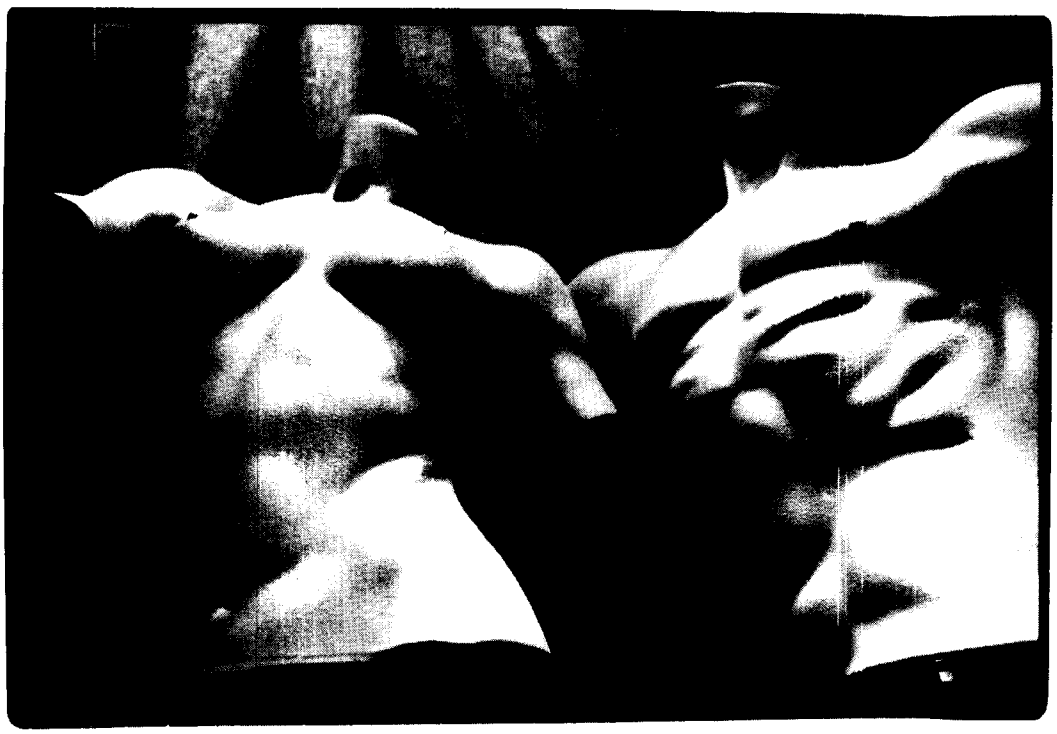

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Anne Phillips

SEXUAL EQUALITY & SOCIALISM

What has socialism to do with sexual equality? At the most general level, we can say that equality is central to socialism, and that equality includes equality between women and men. But the meaning of equality has been widely contested, and this level of generality does not take us very far. Karl Marx was always rather sniffy about empty claims to equality, and his preferred objective—"from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"—seems entirely compatible with a division of labor that allocates different responsibilities to women and men. Later socialists have been more willing to make equality a core value, but they have disagreed over the appropriate balance between equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes, and they have varied widely in their understanding of what it is that has to be equalized. The idea that domestic work, for example, should be distributed equally between women and men was a relatively late development even in feminist circles: as Ellen DuBois has noted in her discussion of nineteenth-century suffragists, "'sharing housework' may be a more uniquely twentieth-century feminist demand than 'smashing monogamy.'"[1]

The Socialist and Liberal Traditions

Equalizing either housework or child care certainly did not figure much in nineteenth-century socialist debate. The so-called utopian socialists tended to favor co-operative arrangements for domestic work or bringing up children. But this derived from their critique of the privatized (self-interested) family rather than from any preoccupation with redistributing work between women and men. Later in the century, Marxists tended to regard women's confinement to the domestic sphere as the key factor in their subordination to men, and looked to the fuller participation of women in socialized production as the means to their emancipation. In Engels's over-optimistic extrapolation from the employment of women in the textile industry, this process was already well underway; in August Bebel's *Women and Socialism*, emancipation through work had to be combined with a program for socializing domestic labor. Instead of each woman being condemned to her own private oven and sink, there would be central kitchens and public laundries, centralized heating arrangements and centralized cleaning services. That the cooks and the cleaners might continue to be women was not, at this stage, considered an issue.

The alternative argument from the nineteenth century was that a genuinely unconfined free market should be enough to deliver sexual equality. This, largely, is what John Stuart Mill argued in his essay on *The Subjection of Women* (published in 1869), where he identified the subjection of women as the main surviving remnant of an earlier social order, and increasingly at odds with the defining principle of modern society. He took this to be the notion that competition and not birth should be what dictates a person's position in life: that instead of our life-chances being determined by the accidents of birth, what we do or become should be a matter that is decided by free competition. "Nobody," as Mill put it, "thinks it necessary to make a law that only a strong-armed man shall be a blacksmith. Freedom and competition suffice to make blacksmiths strong-armed men, because the weak-armed can earn

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more by engaging in occupations for which they are more fit." What, then, was added by the plethora of nineteenth-century legislation that prohibited women from even entering the competitive arena? If the principle of freedom and competition is true, he argued, "we ought to act as if we believed it, and not to ordain that to be born a girl instead of a boy, any more than to be born black instead of white, or a commoner instead of a nobleman, shall decide the person's position through all life."

As is apparent from some of his other writings, Mill was not an unambiguous supporter of free competition. He was also very much taken with the case for cooperative ownership, and he sympathized with many of the socialist arguments of his contemporaries. As far as sexual equality was concerned, however, he did seem to think an unconfined free market—unconfined, that is, by legislation that dictated differential treatment for women and men—should be enough to deliver the desired result. Mill neither anticipated nor desired a world in which men and women would take on the same range of work or responsibilities; he did not expect men to take an equal share of domestic work or child care; and in common with many economists of his time (and later), he believed that too great an influx of women into the labor market would drag down wage levels and make everyone substantially worse off. What mattered was that women should be educated and enabled to support themselves, freed from the legal prohibitions that limited their educational and job opportunities, and released from the inequities in marriage law that made marriage a relationship between master and slave. But once marriage and motherhood had been transformed into a genuinely free choice and consensual arrangement, he expected the majority of women to opt gladly for their conventional role.

If we take these as exemplars of the more sexually egalitarian wings of the socialist and liberal traditions, it is evident that both traditions can generate a commitment to sexual equality. Whatever the historical errors or theoretical failings in Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (published in 1884), no one reading his analysis of male domination and female subjugation can doubt the importance he attached to achieving equality between women and men. And while the popularity of Bebel's *Women and Socialism* owed more to its much-needed vision of the future socialist society than to its specific arguments on women, the book did go through more than fifty editions by the time of his death in 1913 to become one of the most widely read texts in the German socialist movement. John Stuart Mill's writings on sexual equality attracted less contemporary attention than his other works on political theory or political economy, but his consistent backing for most of the central campaigns of nineteenth-century feminism helped secure a close relationship between liberalism and first wave feminism. Neither the socialist nor the liberal tradition has proved itself a strong or consistent supporter of sexual equality; but both can make some claim to being its "natural home."

If there is any basis for feminism claiming a special affinity with socialism, it lies in the socialist critique of privacy, and the way this alerted socialists to the peculiar constraints of the domestic sphere. Liberals were far more likely to defend private spaces against public regulation, and much less likely to regard the household as a place of confinement. Even allowing for John Stuart Mill's strong condemnation of marital slavery, this view of privacy made liberals more inclined to accept some version of "separate spheres." Socialists, by contrast, tended to distrust privacy as inherently individualistic and limiting, and in their celebration of collective activity and socialized production, they were considerably more disparaging of domestic life. For many, this simply spilled over into a disdain for women. For the minority, however, who bothered to address the so-called "Woman Question," it generated more consistent support for women's entry into the labor market than yet figured in the liberal tradition, as well as more imaginative proposals for transforming the conditions under which domestic work was carried out. The difference between the two traditions has sometimes been theorized as a difference between pursuing equality of opportunities and achieving equality of outcomes: liberalism typically focusing on removing *legal* constraints to free up equality of opportunities; socialism typically addressing the

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structural conditions that are necessary to substantial equality. But in its origins, at least, the difference stems as much from the liberal defense of private spaces and the socialist critique of private confinement.

Though the latter offered a basis for allying feminism to the socialist tradition, most of those active in the earlier feminist campaigns found a more congenial home within the liberal camp. Legal constraints and prohibitions were a particularly pressing concern through the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries; and while few liberals showed any great enthusiasm for women's emancipation, those who did gave active support to feminist campaigns. Socialists, meanwhile, tended to play the class card to trump any excessive preoccupation with sexual equality. When Selina Cooper, for example, argued the case for women's suffrage at the 1905 Labour Party Conference, Harry Quelch of the (Marxist) Social Democratic Federation announced that "Mrs. Cooper has placed sex first . . . we have to put Labour first in every case." In the hierarchy of socialist concerns, sexual equality usually came low on the list.

'Second Wave' Feminism

A rather different pattern emerged in the early years of the contemporary women's movement, when feminists found themselves more closely attuned to the socialist than the liberal tradition. Debates through the 1970s were often ordered through a three-way split among liberal, socialist, and radical feminists and, in Britain, far more than in the United States, the overwhelming majority placed themselves in the second or third camp. Previous campaigns had removed many of the more overt legal inequalities, thereby reducing some of the attractions of liberal feminism. But the connections that were made with socialism were also specific to the historical moment, for they reflected a wider political context in which socialism had come to set the terms for radical social critique. Many of the early activists came from a prior involvement in left politics, and even in distancing themselves from socialism, feminists often reproduced its analytical traditions. One of the key texts in the development of a radical (that is, nonsocialist) feminism was Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex*, but Firestone employed a Marxist terminology to identify women as a distinct "sex-class."

Where there was a more substantial theoretical basis to the partnership of socialism with feminism, it lay in the socialist equation of domesticity with confinement. Few feminists went along with the idea that women's emancipation would occur simply through their entry into socialized production. But the notion that sexual inequality was rooted in women's confinement to the private household fitted well with the preoccupations of the 1950s and 1960s: the critique of housework, for example, as a thankless and repetitive cycle in which nothing new was ever created; or the critique of the nuclear family, as requiring women to sacrifice their integrity and personality to the nurture of husbands who would come to despise them, and children whose first task on reaching maturity would be to push their mothers aside. Feminists in the 1990s are far more likely to dwell on the double burden women experience in juggling the demands of paid employment with the care responsibilities that continue to fall almost exclusively on their shoulders. In the formative literature, by contrast, attention was more typically focused on the way that women were silenced, marginalized, turned in on themselves, encouraged to look to fulfillment through finding the "right man," discouraged from any more public activity. In principle, at least, the liberal language of individuality and freedom offered an equally powerful resource for addressing these issues. But liberalism was regarded as condoning a sharp separation between public and private spheres, and turning a blind eye to what went on in the household. This hardly tuned in with the aspirations of those who were experimenting with alternative forms of collective living and collective child care, nor did it have much to say to those who were developing an analysis of male violence. (Not that this last was a strong point among socialists either.)

The distance traveled since then is enormous. For feminists, the most important milestones have been the failure to establish sustainable alternatives to the nuclear family; the steady increase in women's paid employment, which has made the double burden so much more central to feminist analysis; and the disenchantment with that com-

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bination of full-time employment for women and under-staffed and over-regulated nurseries for children, which characterized so many of the state socialist societies. In her outline of feminist approaches to motherhood, Ann Snitow[2] notes the self-questioning of motherhood that characterised so many of the key texts of the 1970s: the attempt to detach being a woman from the requirement to be a mother; but also the attempt to detach biological motherhood from the responsibilities of caring for children. This contrasts markedly with a subsequent celebration of motherhood as generating distinct values of nurturance and care.

In this later phase, the quintessentially feminist program has been a reorganization of paid employment (more substantial parental leave, more part-time work for both women and men, more flexibility in employment patterns) so that both mothers *and* fathers can divide their time equitably between parenthood and work. The idea that parenting could be socialized, either through better social provision of child care services, or through collective living arrangements that draw both parents and nonparents into responsibilities for caring for children, has given way to a more privatized scenario, in which individual mothers and fathers will be enabled to reach a more egalitarian division of their domestic labor. Not that social provision has dropped out of the program: improving and expanding nursery provision, for example, remains a central feminist concern. But feminists are less inclined to view care work just as a "burden" to be lifted from their shoulders onto those of the state. They are also less prepared to view sexual equality as something that changes women's lives without more substantially changing men's.

Over the same period, socialists have also made their peace with privacy; it is no longer presumed that social ownership must be better than private; it is no longer presumed that collective arrangements must be better than individual ones; it is no longer presumed that people find their fulfillment in socialized production or are lessened by watching a video in the privacy of their home. Though the current flurry around community or communitarianism testifies to continuing anxieties about the scale of this shift, most socialists have backed away from the critique of privacy that was so characteristic of the earlier tradition. Most, indeed, have refashioned their socialism to give more place to the individual, and the rights and freedoms of this individual are now regarded as suitable socialist concerns.

Where does this leave any special affinity between socialism and sexual equality? Oddly, it seems, much stronger. Today's socialists are more consistently attuned to the requirements of sexual equality than their predecessors; and in Britain, as elsewhere in Europe, it has been parties on the left of the political spectrum that have been most willing to speed up the process of change. The Labour party is certainly more tuned in than it has been to the issues and problems that confront women, as evidenced in its commitment to recruiting more women as political representatives. But this growing affinity with sexual equality may owe more to the recent convergence between liberal and socialist values (and the associated downgrading of class) than to anything specific to the socialist tradition. What does socialism have to add to the project of sexual equality? Can sexual equality can be achieved within a broadly liberal framework that recognizes the equal worth of all individuals, regardless of their sex? Or is socialism—and if so, what kind of socialism—a necessary condition for sexual equality?

Equality in Contemporary Socialist Thought

David Miller has argued that the attachment to (some kind of) equality does not uniquely distinguish socialists from their opponents.[3] We might equally well note that the attachment to (some kind of) liberty does not uniquely distinguish liberals from their opponents. Today's socialists are very much preoccupied with the relationship between equality and freedom, and most would like to arrive at some trade-off between these two that weights them relatively evenly. One expression of this is the rather disparaging dismissal of strict equality (the "leveler's strategy"); another is the recovery of equality of opportunities as a far more radical strategy than its critics used to admit.

Thus the Labour party's Commission on Social Justice argues for what Stuart White describes as an "endowment egalitarianism" that

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equalizes the initial distribution of capabilities and skills, primarily through education and training.[4] It presents this as an attractive alternative to the more conventional redistribution of income. If the alternative worked, it would short-circuit the equalization-after-the-event that characterizes policies of progressive taxation. Instead of waiting for the inequalities to emerge—and then taxing the rich to pay for the poor—it should be possible to intervene at an earlier stage to equalize life-chances and job opportunities. What makes this particularly attractive in the present political climate is that it promises to ease the tension between equality and freedom. Instead of relying on an interventionist state to deliver more substantial equality of income, people will be equalized to make their own choices, and make what they can of their lives.

Such a strategy is in many ways limited: it seems to accept the slots that are becoming available in an economy that divides jobs more starkly than before into full-time or part-time, high-paid or low-paid, relatively secure or inherently transient, but calls for a more radical understanding of social and job mobility that will empower individuals to move more freely and equally between these slots. That said, the equal opportunities that are implied in the strategy are considerably more substantial than the equal right to enter the competitive arena. They carry with them a strong commitment to eliminating the early patterns of disadvantage that wedge their way around children as they enter the educational system, and they anticipate extensive social intervention to equalize initial endowments. The Commission on Social Justice indeed goes further than this, for it construes equal opportunities as including a lifetime chance to regain ground that was lost at an earlier stage. The idea is not just to equalize our starting positions, and then condone whatever inequalities subsequently emerge. The emphasis on "lifelong learning" suggests that some of the subsequent inequalities must also be tackled—particularly those that relate to inequalities in education and skills.

This reassessment of equal opportunities as an alternative to "strict" equality is one important element in contemporary socialist thinking. It often combines with a further modification—itself heavily influenced by developments in liberal and libertarian theory—which says that inequalities are justified when they arise from individual choice or effort, but unjustified when they arise from "brute-luck." This produces a peculiar amalgam of what used to be viewed as distinctively socialist and liberal traditions, for while the distinction potentially challenges *any* inequalities arising from inherited wealth (the brute-luck of being born to rich parents), it also condones what may be very substantial inequalities of income, so long as these derive from individual effort or choice. The emphasis, again, is on resolving tensions between equality and freedom. The inequalities that have prevented individuals from making their equal choices should be eliminated; but the inequalities that arise from the exercise of this personal choice need not.

This is quite a startling modification of egalitarian ideals, but the standard examples offered in its defense are not particularly controversial. Most people will say it is fair enough for John to earn more than Bill if he has chosen to work longer hours; most people, indeed, will say it is fair enough that those who have chosen to sacrifice their early earning potential by staying on at school or university should later benefit from higher incomes. The problem, as David Miller has noted, is that it is hard to determine what counts as genuine choice, and he uses an example taken from the differences between women and men to illustrate some of the difficulties. We may all agree that John is entitled to more income than Bill if he has chosen to work more intensely and for longer hours, but do we really think John is entitled to more than Belinda, who chose part-time work in order to combine it with looking after her children? The woman who chooses to work part-time "chooses" not only a lower income overall, but very often a job that offers lower hourly pay and minimal job protection; she makes this choice, however, against a background of structural constraints that include her responsibilities to what are still considered "her" children. Virtually all of our choices are structured in some way by the society in which we live, and there may not be much left that is unambiguously chosen. Why should people be required to live with the consequences of their "choice" when they

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had so little alternative? If inequalities are to be regarded as unjustified when they arise from circumstances beyond our control, does this not lead us back to notions of strict equality?

I shall return to this question later. For the moment, I just want to note that the renewed interest in equality of opportunities combines with the attempt to distinguish brute-luck from chosen inequalities to encourage a closer alliance between socialism and sexual equality. Establishing equal opportunities in education and employment has always figured as a major concern in the feminist project (and has often been downgraded by socialists because of its overtly individualistic basis). The renewed emphasis on equal opportunities then provides a strong link to issues of sexual equality. The brute-luck argument looks even more congenial, for any inequalities that can be attributed to the good luck of being born a boy or the bad luck of being born a girl fall self-evidently into the category of unjustified inequalities. So while the recent shifts in socialist thinking have moderated the stricter egalitarianism of an earlier period, they have also been peculiarly favorable to the arguments for equality between women and men. Much of this, of course, reflects the accommodation socialists have now made with key elements in the liberal tradition. This suggests that it is the marriage of socialism with liberalism that now offers the best hope for sexual equality.

Sexual Equality as Strict Equality

So far, so cozy. What I want to argue, however, is that sexual equality is one area where we continue to need strong notions of *strict equality*. None of the economic inequalities between women and men is particularly hard to explain, for whether we look at the sexual distribution of full-time and part-time employment or the disproportionate number of women in jobs that require minimal training or the difficulties women experience in reaching the higher levels on any career ladder, they all point to the unequal division of care work that requires so many women to interrupt their working lives or opt for part-time employment. There is also, of course, overt discrimination, but we do not have to resort to any great conspiracy theory to explain the wage gap between the sexes. Underlying all the sexual inequalities in the labor market is the persistent association of women with care work, and I can see no way out of this short of equalizing this work between women and men. This is an argument for strict equality.

As long as boys and girls continue to grow up with such different expectations of the way they will balance out work and family, this will inevitably affect the choices they make in developing their "endowments." As long as women continue to find themselves with the primary responsibility for caring for the young, the sick, or the elderly, this will inevitably translate into systematic disadvantage on the labor market. If the postwar expansion of women's employment tells us anything, it is that the sexes cannot be equal in their job opportunities when they are so profoundly different in their domestic lives. Unless the responsibilities of care work are equalized between women and men (which depends not only on the level of social provision, but also on major restructuring of the hours and conditions of paid employment), women's income, position, and conditions will continue to reflect the bad luck of being born female.

The argument is most powerful as applied to sexual inequalities in the labor market, but it also extends to such matters as male violence against women. The association between masculinity and aggression—and the much higher incidence of male violence toward women than female violence toward men—can hardly be explained by the fact that men are, on average, bigger and stronger. If this were the explanation, we would be able to identify potential rapists simply by height and strength. The more probable explanation lies in the markedly different expectations our cultures lay on women and men, most of which relate to the sexual division of responsibilities for care. Requiring men to rock their babies to sleep or look after parents with Alzheimer's disease may not, of itself, reduce the incidence of rape. But it does not take great theoretical sophistication to perceive the connection between the sexual division of care work and the norms of masculine behavior.

I am not claiming that a more equitable distribution of care work between women and men

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resolves all problems of sexual inequality, for although I do see the sexual division of labor as crucial in sustaining sexual hierachies and oppressions, I would not want to present equality in employment and care work as the only feminist concern. Nor would I want to argue that a more equitable distribution between mothers and fathers resolves all problems of care work: I think there is a great deal still to be said about the closures of the nuclear family; and even if we set this to one side, a significant number of parents (overwhelmingly women) are bringing up children on their own, and depend crucially on social provision for child care and other services. The point I am stressing is that *any* inequality between women and men is unjustified. Whatever other conclusions we may reach about justified and unjustified inequalities of income or justified and unjustified inequalities of power, there can be no justification for a distribution of income or power that is skewed by sex, any more than for one that is skewed by race.

Similar conclusions emerge if we switch from individual entitlement to consider the social distribution of incomes as a whole. In his discussion of comprehensive egalitarianism, David Miller shifts the basis of the argument away from what individuals might or might not be entitled to, and toward the degree of inequality that a society can accept as compatible with recognizing equality of status. What we may deserve then becomes of secondary importance. Whether the poor are "deserving" or not, there is a limit to how much a society premised on equal status can condone people living in abject poverty; whether the rich are "deserving" or not, there is a limit to the range of income differential that is compatible with an egalitarian society. There is, in Miller's view, no requirement for strict equality, and he rules this out as incompatible with personal autonomy. Societies can and must live with a certain degree of income inequality, but it is impossible to regard all citizens as enjoying equal standing when the disparities become grotesque.

As applied to specifically sexual inequalities, however, this argument seems to confirm the case for strict equality. It certainly implies that the income differentials between women and men should not be so large as to undermine any notion of equal standing between the sexes. But the notion of equal status would have to go considerably further, for any income differential that seemed to be tied to one's sex or race would surely be incompatible with equality of status. An egalitarian society might be able to live with a one-to-four income differential, but could it live with the notion that being born female, or being born black, had condemned one to the lower half of that scale? And if it could not live with this, would this not imply that the sexes must be distributed in roughly equal proportions across the full range of income inequalities?

Though this all seems terribly obvious to me, I am aware that it is not so obvious to everyone else. For most people, I think, the argument carries more conviction when it is applied to the distribution of ethnic groups than when it is applied to the distribution of women and men. If it can be established that one's chances in the labor market are related to the color of one's skin, most people will see this as unjustified. (When people defend racial inequalities in employment, they tend to argue that what appears to be an effect of race is in reality an effect of class.) But if it can be established that one's chances in the labor market are related to one's sex, many people still view this with equanimity, for they see it as a "natural" enough consequence of women's role as mothers, and the way this affects their patterns of employment. It may be unfortunate, but is not necessarily seen as unfair. Indeed, it is far more likely to be seen as a matter of the choices that women have made. It is not only men who will say this, for women do see themselves as having a choice in the matter, and many (very sensibly) opt for the pleasures of motherhood over the intensities of contemporary employment. The issue then comes back to what counts as genuine choice. Do we say this was not a genuine choice because it was made within certain constraints? Or is that setting such a high standard for choice that it renders the term virtually meaningless?

If we say that nothing counts as a choice unless it was made from a full range of options, we are, I think, emptying the word of its meaning. All the choices we make are made within certain constraints, but that does not mean they were not choices. I cannot choose to be an opera singer

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because I do not have the necessary voice, but that does not stop me from feeling that I make genuine choices between the other options at my disposal. I cannot vote for my ideal party because that party does not exist, but that does not stop my feeling that I make genuine choices between the parties that contest an election. Neither of these restrictions, however, marks me out from anyone else. We all lack the necessary talents for something we would have liked to pursue; we all have political aspirations that no party has yet promised to meet. The point about sexual or racial inequality is that the range of choices has been restricted in a blanket fashion by the characteristics of sex or race: the accident of being born female or black, into a society where this still structures our lives.

I owe this formulation to John Stuart Mill—to the exemplar of the liberal rather than the socialist tradition—but in my view it leads to a much stricter equality than was ever envisaged by Mill. The accident of being born male or female no longer carries significant consequences in the field of legal entitlement, and has rapidly decreasing consequences in the field of education. It still has very significant effects, however, on the responsibilities the individual assumes for care work, and on the positions the individual occupies in employment or politics. Sex remains a major predictor of an individual's life chances, and wherever this is the case, there is a prima facie case for equalization. Any inequality that arises from being female should simply be ruled out of court.

To rephrase this, we might say that there is no significant space between equality of opportunities and equality of outcomes when it comes to sexual or racial equality. If the outcomes turn out to be statistically related to sex or race, then the opportunities were clearly not equal. If we assume that talents and predilections are roughly equally distributed among the sexes, then the only explanation for a disproportionate concentration of men in certain kinds of activities and a disproportionate concentration of women in others must be the social structures and conventions that constrain our development. The very fact that men and women end up occupying different positions in the distribution of work and influence and income is evidence enough of unjustified inequality. What else, short of some genetic imbalance, could explain it? (I will not consider here the further questions that might arise if a future generation of psychologists managed to prove some genetic distinction, and whether that would then count as a justification for sexual inequality. I do not see that it would, but given the immense difficulties in separating out genetic from environmental factors, it is not a problem that is likely to face us.) Wherever there is a systematic differentiation between the sexes—in the distribution of jobs or care work or influence or incomes—this alerts us to unjustified inequality. The only inequalities we can possibly justify are those that relate to features other than sex or race.

Are Any Inequalities Justified?

Up to this point, I have reserved judgment on the wider issue. I have argued that, whatever distinction we may make between justified and unjustified inequalities, sexual and racial inequalities will always fall into the second camp. Let me now make some attempt at the wider issue. Should sex and race be regarded as exceptional? And if so, why? I suggested earlier that it was the blanket nature of sexual and racial inequalities that marked them out from other chance restrictions on our opportunities or outcomes: that we can accommodate inequalities that derive from *individual* variations (being tone deaf, being physically uncoordinated, being good or bad at math), but cannot accommodate those that derive from blanket injunctions. Yet in either case, we are dealing with the accidents of birth. All inequalities of power or income must arise either from an inequality in social conditions or else from an unequal inheritance of capacities and talents, among which we must surely include the capacity for hard work. From a socialist perspective, the first looks self-evidently unjust. The second also seems unfair, for these things are hardly under our control. The problem with the second, however, is that we cannot just legislate all these differences away, for if we did, we would end up eliminating much of what we value in life.

It is not really fair, for example, that those with a gift for language should be better placed to influence decisions than those who find it hard to articulate their opinions, and it is particularly unfair when the class bias in educational oppor-

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tunities skews this in favor of certain social groups. But even if we managed to eliminate the class bias, there would still be differences of personality and ability that made some individuals more persuasive than others. The only way to eliminate this would be to end all political discussion, and we would hardly be happy with this. It may also seem unfair, to follow a line of argument much loved by Robert Nozick, that an individual born with a Grecian profile should have a better sex life than an individual born with a snub nose.[4] But if the only way to deal with this is to allocate sexual partners at random, thereby eliminating any element of personal choice, we would hardly be happy with this. We cannot legislate against all accidents of birth, and to this extent, we are stuck with some inevitable level of inequality. What we need is some way of distinguishing the inevitable *individual* variations (some people are just more lucky than others) from those associated with more blanket injunctions. From a socialist perspective, this second category would certainly include the disabilities that flow from one's class; it should also include the disabilities that flow from one's sex or the color of one's skin.

I do not pretend that this is an easy distinction, for all differences between individuals lend themselves to a group classification (the class of people who are tone deaf, for example, and by virtue of this group characteristic are denied the chance to work in the music business), and what one person defines as bad luck will be perceived by another as a blanket injunction. I also recognize that arguments for strict equality can be modified by pragmatic concerns. I would argue, for example, that inherited inequalities of wealth are always unjustified, but given the widespread desire to pass on to one's children the benefits built up through one's life, it may be impossible to get majority support for 100 percent tax on inheritance. In a similar vein, I would argue that sexual inequalities in power or income are always unjustified, but I would accept a strategy that started with some initial redistribution and worked up toward equal shares; or that started with increasing the proportion of women in male-dominated occupations and built up toward full gender parity. In this, as in any area of social policy, one cannot hope to do everything overnight. The final aim, however, must surely be to eliminate inequalities associated with sex. I can see no normative basis for stopping short of full sexual equality.

Socialism as a Condition For Sexual Equality

It is at this point that the special affinity between socialism and sexual equality comes more sharply to the fore. Sexual equality, as I understand it, depends on a major restructuring of the relationship between paid and unpaid labor so as to detach this division from the distinction between women and men. Sexual equality cannot be achieved simply through socialized provision of services (more day care centers, more home aides and meals on wheels, more homes for the disabled or the mentally ill or the elderly), for while these can certainly help equalize conditions for women and men, they do so by shifting care responsibilities from women working in the privacy of their home to (usually) women employed by the state. There are necessary limits to this strategy, for none of us wants a world in which care work is entirely institutionalized. The strategy also leaves untouched the differential roles of women and men. It will still be women who do the work; it will still be women who depend on the services. When these are threatened or removed, it will still be women who have to carry the consequences. The longer term solution lies in combining socialized care provision with a new balance between paid and unpaid work. This ultimately depends on restructuring the hours and patterns of employment, for men as well as for women.

The kinds of policies necessary to achieve this range from what is already practiced in some social democracies (notably in Scandinavia) to what we can hardly begin to imagine. They would include substantial periods of paid parental leave that could be taken by either mothers or fathers; a requirement on employers to offer reduced working hours to any employees (male or female) who carry major responsibilities for caring for the young, sick, or old; additional rights to periods of unpaid leave that would allow people to break their employment without losing their right to their job; and, most important of all, a major reduction in the hours, and alteration in the shifts, of *male* employment, so that male workers are equally enabled to assume their caring responsibilities. To

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put this more generally, the necessary changes would involve a final, much belated, recognition that the typical worker is no longer a man with a housewife in tow, and a reordering of the priorities of employment to recognize that all of us have a great deal to do outside the factory and office.

Left to its own devices, an unregulated market economy can never deliver this. The market is no great respecter of sexual distinction when it comes to employment practices: there has been no wringing of hands over the decline of male employment in the old bases of manufacturing industry and the simultaneous increase in female employment; the market has not stepped in to restore masculine pride. But while we may well rely on the forces of free competition to equalize participation rates between women and men, we cannot rely on these forces to reshape the hours and conditions of work. It is, indeed, one of the appalling ironies of the present period that high levels of unemployment coincide with an extraordinary intensification of work for those lucky enough to find jobs, and that the very insecurities of the job market have exposed people to longer hours. The market will happily release a significant proportion of adults from the constraints of paid employment, but it does this only to doom others to workaholic excess, and we cannot realistically rely on this market to establish sensible divisions between paid employment, care work, and leisure. Only a direct political initiative, underpinned by a strong commitment to sexual equality, could put the necessary changes in place.

Having said that, the kind of socialism required to achieve this may not be particularly radical. When Karl Marx examined the struggles in nineteenth-century Britain to reduce the length of the working day, he argued that when the restrictions were imposed, they ultimately turned out to capital's advantage. Employers were forced to abandon the rather primitive approach to profits that depended on lengthening the working day, and turn their attention to raising the productivity of labor. The result was further and often spectacular improvements in profitability—but left to their own devices, the employers would never have agreed to shortening the working day. It took a major political initiative (and as it happened, one that particularly restricted the employment of women workers) to force them into a new round of economic development. Reshaping employment patterns so that they fit with the new realities of the labor market might well have similar effects; the kind of sexual equality I am describing might then turn out to be compatible with a capitalist economy. It is not compatible, however, with a hands-off noninterventionism that allows the immediate requirements of employers to dictate the hours and patterns of work.

What I am describing here is probably more accurately described as social democracy than socialism, but it does imply a radically different scale of values in which production is tailored to social need, and caring for people takes equal priority alongside producing marketable goods and services. Socialism in this (rather attenuated) sense is a precondition for sexual equality, for freeing up the opportunities for girls in education or women in employment does not provide the necessary structural changes that can deliver life-long equality, and we need a more decisive challenge to market principles. It is impossible to eliminate all inequalities between people; it is undesirable to eliminate all differences. But both differences and inequalities have to be detached from the accident of being born male or female, so that the choices we make and the inequalities we condone reflect individual, rather than sexual, variation. It was the liberal tradition that first gave voice to this ideal, but it is socialism that could make it reality. □

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Notes

[1] Ellen DuBois, "The Radicalism of the Woman Suffrage Movement: Notes Toward the Reconstruction of Nineteenth-Century Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 3, 1/2 (1975) p. 66.

[2] Ann Snitow, "Feminism and Motherhood: An American Reading," *Feminist Review* 40 (1992)

[3] David Miller, "What Kind of Equality Should the Left Pursue?" in Franklin (ed.), *Equality*.

[4] Stuart White, "What Do Egalitarians Want?" in Franklin (ed.), *Equality*.

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Amos Oz

ON SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND THE KIBBUTZ

Are we all condemned to choose between Margaret Thatcher and Leonid Brezhnev? Is there a path that is neither Social Darwinism nor ideocratic bureaucracy?

In some parts of the world, the third path seems to be the return to the kinds of religion that exhort their adherents to accept their material poverty and renounce the pleasures of this world (which is, after all, a "mere corridor"). Both socialism and capitalism are depicted by various disciples of sundry sects as manifestations of western decadence. These true believers reject the "hedonistic and materialistic miasma of the West," and are contemptuous of the "world of modernity." Positions like these are the most obvious common denominator among Islamic extremism, Russian Slavophilic mysticism, Jewish messianic nationalism and insularity, some forms of Christianity, and, perhaps, the fanatical fringes of the Green movements. (There are, of course, different religious forces as well: Catholic socialism, the liberation theology movement in Latin America, Jewish streams that exhibit social and moral sensitivity.)

And is there yet a fourth path? Social democracy has regressed in some places while gaining ground in others (including some of the former communist countries). Social democracy does not usually arouse the kinds of passion that communism or capitalism or religious renewal movements seem to inspire. Despite the fact that no nineteenth-century social vision has achieved more success (and with less bloodshed) than the idea of the welfare state promoted by democratic socialism, we hardly ever encounter social democratic enthusiasm. Maybe this is due to the fundamentally practical temperament of social democracy. But if it has succeeded, why does it carry an air of diminution?

Some of the achievements of the welfare state have been gradually incorporated into capitalism so that many people have forgotten the movement that fostered them: trade unions, the right to strike, free universal education, public health services, and the minimum wage. Virtually all health, pension, and unemployment compensation laws are the fruit of democratic socialist efforts. If this kind of legislation were presented these days under the banner of democratic socialism in the United States, for example, it would be rejected out of hand. Furthermore, social democracy's achievements have, in some parts, come to be taken for granted, like a pair of comfortable slippers. The principles of democratic socialism are inherently "lukewarm" and evolutionary. They don't scatter sparks of radical fury and they are far from the intoxicating barricades of fashionably revolutionary ideas.

The invitation to identify with a revolution whose heroes are the "working class," the "oppressed victims of colonialism," ecological balance, or the sexually oppressed, is far more colorful and electrifying than a sensibility directed toward the elderly or the unemployed, the person in need of an income supplement or the chronically ill. Moreover, it is the nature of dreams realized and promises kept to leave, in their very realization, an aftertaste of disappointment. Even triumph cannot sweeten the waning of the adrenaline that surges at the time of the battle.

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So That When Evening Falls Our Lives Will Be a Little Better

Because every age is the most significant one for its "residents," there is no point in ascribing special importance to the twentieth century. Nonetheless, there is something unprecedented about our century. If we approach history in terms of the degree of change caused by historical events in people's daily lives—in the kitchen and the bedroom, in work and play—we find that in the last hundred or hundred and fifty years there have been more changes than in any earlier period: a "resident" of the third century B.C.E. suddenly transported to the third century C.E., or a "resident" of the fifth century C.E. transplanted to the fifteenth century, would adjust more easily than anyone from any previous century transported to our age, and not only because of the technological revolution. From the dawn of civilization until the threshold of this century, urban and rural men and women could depend, from childhood, on three unshakable certainties: where they would live, what they would do, and what would happen to them after they died. They would live in the place where they were born or around the corner; he would do what his father did and she would do what her mother did, or close to it; and after death they would go to a sphere in whose existence they believed wholeheartedly.

These certainties have disintegrated in recent times, and the foundations of the world of millions of people have been shaken. The age-old certainties have not vanished all at once but have waned—at first in small enclaves, and afterward in ever-widening areas—at varying rates, according to "local time." Even today, there are large segments of humanity for whom these certainties still exist.

When the homely certainties disappear, a thirst is created that ideologies seek to quench—a thirst for guidance, meaning, and a sense of purpose. An expanding range of personal choices has created a need for some sort of "handbook" that will teach us how and what to choose, or will relieve us of the burden of independent choice and the loneliness inherent in making choices.

Most of the popular ideologies that developed in the nineteenth century sought to produce comprehensive compensation for the loss of these "intimate certainties" and to provide us with guidance about how to behave and what to prefer in every possible personal situation. They aimed to give a significance to every phenomenon, a purpose for every deed, to tie everything together in the flow of history. Both liberalism and democratic socialism are exceptions because they do not offer an interpretation for every phenomenon and do not pretend to have total prescriptions for every sphere of life.

The social democrats did not strive to "destroy the old world down to its foundations," but rather to moderate and modify several social inclinations and some social institutions. In contrast to various radical forces, the social democrats never felt the need to depict some diabolical antagonist, whose destruction would herald world redemption. They didn't preach salvation at all and contented themselves with reform and repair. The democratic socialist movement has almost always been distant from both burning hatred and ecstatic enthusiasm. And in this, too, liberalism and social democracy are similar. The outstanding difference between them is found in liberalism's focus on questions of liberties and civil rights, and the nature of the desired contract between the individual and state institutions, while democratic socialism also sought a gradual—and necessarily imperfect—way to establish justice.

When John F. Kennedy called upon his fellow Americans to ask "not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country," his words echoed with ideologies of which Kennedy himself had no part. A liberal would have posed the opposite question at the same time: What can and should your government do for you?, whereas the social democrat would ask: What are you willing to do, together with your fellows, for the common good of all of you?

More than one ideological movement has promised humanity great happiness in the future, to be attained by sacrifice in the present. They have always charted a hard road leading ultimately to some promised land, always de-

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manding that you first endure "forty years in the desert" before you—or your descendants—reach fulfillment of the vision. But democratic socialism didn't have a "final destination" or a "promised land." It accorded a fair amount of importance to the present and was thus, perhaps, the most prosaic of world-reforming movements.

In contrast to various "redemptive" movements, the social democrats had no vision of an apocalypse that would usher in "the end of history" and the beginning of an everlasting reign of happiness. Rather, they investigated what they could do during the course of today so that when evening falls, our lives would be a little better than they were yesterday and the day before. Indeed, in this dramatic century of ours, democratic socialism is the least dramatic ideology, the least theatrical of all: without uniforms and parades, almost devoid of symbols, and with almost no heroes or martyrs. But most important, it has almost no pretensions of reshaping the culture.

In the long run, democratic socialism was more successful than other movements because its perception of human nature was more subtle and complex. Maybe not as subtle and complex as it might have been, but certainly less simplistic than those of some of its adversaries. It allowed for a wider range of human inclinations, as well as for human freedom—at least as a postulate—and for inherent imperfectibility. Like liberalism (but in total contrast to some other trends on the left and right), social democracy never presumed to replace the institution of the family or to reshape it according to ideological needs, or to position the family in a context wider or more "important" than itself.

Other ideologies that sought to make revolutionary changes in the social order not only suffered utter defeat but were defiled by the blood of their adherents as well as their opponents. Democratic socialism may have faded precisely because its ideas and accomplishments have become so self-evident that many people do not perceive it as an ideological stream but rather as a temperate climate—part of the standard contract between the individual and society and between the individual and an enlightened government. Ironically, the great achievements of social democracy have almost caused it, in some places, to pass gently away.

The Parent Promises It Tomorrow, The Child Wants It Right Now

Not all of the dreams of the social democrats have been fulfilled. Perhaps the prime treasure that they set out to hunt for has not yet been found: once upon a time there was a hope at the heart of democratic socialist theory that a society that reduced the gap between rich and poor, and legislated mutual responsibility—a sort of "extended-family ethos"—would eventually engender spontaneous solidarity among its members. Something like "habit becomes second nature," an end to alienation and to "dog eat dog."

In this respect, the disciples of the social democratic welfare state have sustained an ongoing disappointment. The welfare state, in its most celebrated examples in Scandinavia, has become enmeshed in a net of impersonal bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is, to be sure, utterly different from the cruel and degenerated bureaucracy of the communist dictatorships: the social democratic bureaucracy is restrained and well-meaning. And precisely because of its good intentions, it has accustomed great numbers of people to view it as a sort of surrogate parent, fair and responsible but impersonal and always busy. The state has become mother, the administration father, and the role of both parents is to meet all of the needs of the citizen who has grown accustomed to viewing himself or herself as a perpetual minor. In its successes, the welfare state has created an ethos of entitlement, of "I am deserving"—regardless of my efforts or accomplishments. And this ethos has quickly degenerated into a kind of constant sourness: "I am deprived," "Others get more than I do," or "They got before I did." An impulse of mechanical and even aggressive equality has gained widespread legitimacy in the social democracies.

We frequently see the administration and the citizen in the welfare state in confrontation, like a recalcitrant child and an uncooperative parent. The child holds the sanction of the screaming baby, including the right to use the infantile argument, "Then how come *they* can?" And the parent is in a state of constant self-justification, mumbling that what cannot be granted today will undoubtedly be given tomorrow . . . or the

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day after.

This is perhaps one of the sources of crisis in the social democratic welfare states, including the wealthiest among them: there is nowhere to take from in order to give to citizens what they "deserve," which is undefined and, in principle, limitless. According to the "entitlement ethic," one is entitled to an education, including secondary, post-secondary, a B.A.—and why not an M.A. and a Ph.D? One is entitled, too, perhaps, to wander around the world for a carefree year or two; one is entitled to a period of apprenticeship and specialization. All of these are the responsibility of the "grownup world," parents and state—or more precisely, the parents demand that the state assume most of the responsibility. And all of this means that childhood is extended almost to age thirty, and until then the state has to support you—directly or indirectly through assistance and subsidies to your parents, because you are still preparing for life. And again, the state must stand and wait for you thirty years later at the next bend in the road, to hand you a warm robe and slippers, because now you are tired and you deserve to stretch your legs in a pensioner's armchair while the state cares, supplies, cures, entertains, and pampers you a little.

Well, there is no arithmetic in the world by which thirty working and productive age cohorts will manage to support and pamper (in addition to themselves) another forty to fifty cohorts who either have not yet begun to be productive or have already finished their shift and gone to relax. All of this in an age of rising life expectancy in the affluent countries. We also ought to ask ourselves, if everyone deserves a higher education, comprehensive specialization, a diploma or two—what will all these diplomaed experts do in a job market that needs only some of them? And who, if not poor immigrants from the third world, will do all the "unskilled" work?

To paraphrase Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous call, "I have a dream," one could say that one of the reasons for the decline of social democracy is that it has left nothing to dream about. And yet its promise to its citizens (or its children) is becoming more and more difficult to maintain: "Vote for me and I will increase your benefits." Surely this horn of plenty is doomed to run dry one day, because where will the plenty come from?

The controversy between conservatives and world reformers is sometimes sketched as a conflict between freedom and justice: certain conservatives, together with some liberals, view the urge for social justice as a threat to individual freedom: don't kill the mockingbird. Don't dare to engineer society and refurbish humanity, lest you bring gulags upon us. Socialism responds by saying that the ideal of freedom is sometimes an alibi for the right of the strong to prey on the weak.

The controversy reveals a certain disagreement about human nature: Is it inherently good? When left to its own devices, will things work out for the best? Or is human nature inherently evil, and "if not for fear of the law, humanity will devour his fellow man," as the Jewish sages said?

This controversy contains a latent paradox: conservatives are more often than not skeptical and even pessimistic about human nature. Yet they maintain that it is best to minimize the intervention of society and government in the power struggles between individuals and groups. Socialists, for their part, tend to be cheerfully optimistic in their view of human nature yet, lo and behold, they preach social planning and restraint of power from above. We find conservatives who believe that the egotism intrinsic in every individual organizes millions of selfish pursuits into an orchestrated, prosperous public arena, through a natural mechanism of balance. Society, therefore, ought to keep its interference at a minimum.

Between the socialists and the conservatives there are various liberalisms that view human beings as rational, individualistic, indeed motivated by self-interest, but not necessarily as beasts of prey. This view maintains that individual liberty, including rights of property, needs only minimal restraint and even that ought to be anchored in a sensible contract between citizens and their government.

In the controversy regarding the goodness or the dangers of human nature, it might be best, if for no reason other than caution's sake, to support the pessimists: humans are sometimes dan-

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gerous to each other, whether motivated by lust for money and power or draped in the mantle of patriotism, whether motivated by religious zeal, chauvinist ecstasy, or ideological devotion.

On the face of things, at least, it seems that the conservative's recognition of the selfishness that characterizes human nature is an argument in favor of the social democrat's conclusion that we need to restrain the power struggles between individuals. Liberals can teach us that the restraints themselves must be limited and kept strongly in check.

The cheerful belief that reforming society will bring with it an improvement in human nature has been proven false. The welfare state did not turn its citizens into brothers and sisters. Socialist education did not succeed in uprooting the baser instincts of selfishness, competitiveness, violence, and envy from the hearts of its students. The workers of the world have not united. Kibbutz children did not become a new species of benevolent human beings. The mistake may have been in assuming that "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach," that we are all essentially economic creatures: give us a degree of material security and we will immediately feel a sense of general satisfaction; our character will improve; and our baser instincts will disappear. It has not happened.

The Village Within the Metropolis

In a world where most people are moving in the direction of urbanization, professionalization, estrangement between neighbors, and the separation of work and family life, it would seem almost absurd to hope for a renewal of the old "circles of respect and shame." We leave our homes in the morning, some of us to join the endless centipede of private cars crawling along the road, and some of us to be herded among strangers in crowded trains and buses. We spend most of our waking hours surrounded by strangers or by superficial acquaintances, bound by ties of professional hierarchy or competition. At night we return home to rest and relax or go out for an evening's entertainment among strangers. The Talmud tell us, "And if a man should see that his desire overcomes him, let him go to a place of strangers . . . ." Namely, to people whose personal respect is not important to him and whose ridicule or anger do not shame him. In many parts of our world, real personal relationships have survived only within the nuclear family. The world beyond the family has become a battlefield, a rating contest, or a wasteland.

And yet we can find places, here and there, where a new routine has begun to evolve. More and more people work from home. More and more students study in front of a computer screen in their room instead of a blackboard in a classroom. If this trend, a result of the computer revolution, is truly changing living habits on a significant scale, then there may be a real chance for a renaissance of small neighborly communities—in suburbs, in neighborhoods, in apartment buildings. Instead of the familiar anthill of production halls and office cages, a person will be able to take a break from the workroom at home over a cup of coffee or lunch with family or neighbors at the local cafe, at a nearby club, or at the corner restaurant. We will be able to reopen channels of communication with other people who are not our supervisors or subordinates and to recreate relationships that are not merely hierarchical, collegial, or competitive.

Renewal of the neighborhood fabric, coffee breaks at the local cafe, spontaneous meetings with neighbors, all create a possibility for revitalization of the acquaintance community—the village within the metropolis. Such community offers opportunities for the involvement of parents in their children's education—parents will be able to drop in at school to see how their daughter is or to spend a little time at the kindergarten to read their son a story.

In strengthening these not overly large circles of neighbors who know one another, as well as a civic society crisscrossed by a weave of voluntary organizations, support groups, and study groups, we will create the preconditions for a culture of respect and shame. This may generate a new and more mature kind of social democracy, based on the active involvement of every individual. No longer will social services, education, crime, or local environmental issues be the responsibility solely of some faraway member of parliament or the police or anonymous "authorities." One can gather neighbors together to take action. Similarly, we will not

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be forced to send our sick and elderly to institutions out of sight and out of mind. We will be able to care for them, up to a point, in the framework of the neighborhood.

A host of human obligations that the tired commuter has transferred to the welfare state might be re-established in the intimate community of neighbors. Rather than people who preserve their rights by filling out forms, we can become partners in our own lives.

Differential and Integral

Social democracy can reinvigorate itself if it looks for inspiration to the kibbutz at its best—an acquaintance community in which people relate to one another in circles of respect and shame. What you have done well will bring you respect and even admiration. What you have done wrong or badly will bring shame upon you. In a kibbutz at its best, rather than spending most of your time among strangers and superficial acquaintances, in and out of work, you are among people whose respect you seek. Rather than profit, or professional recognition, or envy of your material achievements, you look to them for personal affirmation.

In every society, no matter how small, and even within the family, there are two contradictory forces at work: an integral vector and a differential vector. The integral is what holds couples, friends, partners, or a kibbutz together. The differential is the force that drives them apart. Heaven help the society in which the differential is stronger than the integral.

The codes upon which the integral of the kibbutz (and the Israeli labor movement more generally) were based were codes of sensitivity to injustice. There were certainly elements of power craving, party discipline, conformism, hypocrisy, and a measure of empty rhetoric mixed into the integral: the failures and shortcomings of Israeli labor and of the kibbutz movement are now common knowledge. But perhaps we ought to remind ourselves that these movements were not solely a failure or a disgrace: despite the hypocrisy, the self-righteousness, the phrasemaking, and the conformity, the codes of equality and struggle against injustice were deep and genuine.

The differential vector reminds us time and again that we prey on each other, that we are blank walls to our comrades, or that we are bothers to each other. The socioeconomic temper that is so popular today is essentially a differential temper—catch as catch can—that perceives selfishness and unrestrained competitiveness as virtues. In the current view of many, poverty is the problem of the poor, illness is the problem of the sick and their families. Western society is increasingly becoming a limited liability endeavor. The tide of abundance in the affluent society does not rise in every house—maybe not even in most.

Moreover, the rise of enclaves of wealth occurs in a world in which more than half of humanity is impoverished and without hope. The world of the wealthy gallops along its path, secure in its banal view of human nature, maintaining that a full stomach hungers only for luxuries, delicacies, and amusement. In order to provide continuous stimulation for this appetite, a huge industry has developed and created a pornography of consumption: a fetishism of status symbols shining in rainbow colors, stockings woven with a transcendent glow, digestive pills illuminated by apocalyptic gospel, revolutionary cleaning fluids that leave a heavenly glare, futuristic toilets that flush in the dawn of a messianic age. And the rich are pushed by the hype of the pornography of consumption to work past their human limits in order to earn more than they need so that they can purchase things they don't really want so as to impress strangers they don't care about.

'No Man Is an Island'

We can renew or rebuild a social integral only on the basis of a sensitivity to wrongdoing and a thirst for justice joined to an awareness of our need for one another. In this respect, the Israeli labor movement and the kibbutz at its best have done better than the western European or Scandinavian welfare states. Between the 1920s and the 1960s, a public sphere with a certain sense of intimacy was created in Israel. The intimacy between individuals was sometimes overburdened by an intense mutual affinity that jumbled together closeness, tension, cooperation, gossip,

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mutual responsibility, intellectual conformism, and fruitful controversy. Perhaps this was also due to a unique historic situation—the euphoria of the birth of a nation—that created a feverishness and a degree of intellectual and emotional intensity. People talked to one another day and night in those years. By going to sleep, you exposed a certain weakness: anybody worth his salt didn't leave in the middle—and this "middle" was almost ceaseless.

Under the communist regimes, a reality was created in which individuals were enemies—what is good for you is almost always bad for me and what is good for me almost certainly won't do you any good. Paradoxically, there may be a certain similarity between such a communist atmosphere and the spirit that imbues capitalist countries: the "other" is essentially no more than my client, supplier, adversary, or at best, a (temporary) partner based on mutual interest. In the social democracies, a polite indifference toward the "other" sometimes developed: we are all attached to the same teats and we all suckle from them, and as long as you stay away from my teat, you're welcome to yours.

If the need for the "other" as fellow still exists or has begun to reawaken, then there is a future for social democracy and maybe for the idea of the kibbutz as well. It is hard to imagine what the kibbutz will look like a few years from now. Will it still be called "kibbutz"? Will it be a continuation of existing kibbutzim? Will it spring up in other places, in a different incarnation? In any event, it is doubtful whether it will preserve its ambience of a compound and a common yard. It seems unlikely that people will dance an ecstatic hora or sing around a campfire into the night. Or argue, discuss, vote, and argue again until dawn. Perhaps the kibbutz will be reinvented in other countries. There is a chance that the kibbutz will last, or reappear, because it fills one of the oldest and most persistent human needs: the need for solidarity, the thirst for fellowship. And this is a thirst that the communist regime and the capitalist reality, and even the bureaucratic welfare state, cannot satisfy. (But we must never attempt to satisfy that thirst at the expense of another human thirst, just as deep, for privacy, individuality, and a measure of solitude).

Maybe now, at the threshold of the twenty-first century, the idea of kibbutz is more timely than ever before. Society without a dimension of empathy becomes fertile ground for all sorts of sects and cults. It breeds gurus, mullahs and ayatollahs, "Moral Majorities," false messiahs, and purveyors of all sorts of ecstasies who will respond to the need for an intimate society that moderates the competitive urge: the spiritual need for solidarity and for circles of respect and shame.

An empathetic society does not require the individual to sacrifice himself or herself for others nor does it seek to blur the boundaries between me and the next person. We must not allow the aspiration toward equality to become an aspiration toward uniformity or an attempt to make all of us similar to one another. *The value of human equality must be based on the equal right of human beings to be different from one another*, without allowing the differences to become a source of privilege. The value of sharing does not mean self-effacement, because without a sense of self you have nothing to share with your comrade. The value of solidarity is based on the premise that "no man is an island—every man is part of a continent." Actually, most of us are probably more like peninsulas.

An Empathetic Society

The kibbutz erred badly when it tried to actualize the values of equality and solidarity through regulations diminishing the uniqueness of the individual. More than once, kibbutzniks made the mistake of trying to preserve rules and regulations when solidarity was weakening under the press of their petty prohibitions.

There is always a tragic-comic gap between dreamers and their dreams: the dreams are lofty and the dreamers plagued by contradictions, and therefore the fulfillment of all dreams is doomed to be partial and flawed. Perhaps the only way to preserve a dream intact is to never try to fulfill it. The kibbutz, for example, was born from a dream and an aspiration to improve human nature within a generation or two by changing its social circumstances. But the change in circumstances was sometimes achieved by social pressure that was meant to

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stifle volcanic middle-class appetites. (It might have been wiser to compromise a bit with these appetites.)

And yet, there doesn't seem to be any other social structure that has succeeded, over the course of at least three or four generations, in offering nonritualistic satisfaction to the yearning for fellowship. The kibbutz experience proves, if only on a "laboratory" scale, that those who view humanity as a species of predators are not entirely correct. Human beings may, under certain conditions, display a certain amount of spontaneous solidarity between themselves—they will be open to voluntary sharing and will channel their competitive instincts in nonmaterialistic directions. In the kibbutz, no person's problem is "his problem"; every person is "our problem," even if he or she is a troublemaker and a burden. Such achievements are few in the history of social experiments. Up to a point, the kibbutz was able to maintain an ongoing sense of mutual responsibility between people who were not related by blood or marriage, and were not subordinate to any higher or external authority. Moreover, the kibbutz was not a marginalized village enclave cut off from the twentieth century—it was very close to the pulse of the era. The kibbutz is a potential source of inspiration for future social reformers who can try to avoid its shortcomings. By drawing upon the resources of humor, relativism, patience, and the ability to live with the paradoxes of human nature, the idea of fellowship may be reclaimed. What renewal requires is an effort to integrate communitarian ideas into a liberal worldview.

Once we forgo the imaginary paradise in which an enlightened society begets morally elevated individuals, we need not fall straight into a Darwinian inferno. There is an alternative to the dichotomy of paradise and inferno that enables us to reconcile imperfect liberty with imperfect social justice. Perhaps it is not unthinkable to base the conclusions of social democracy on the cautiously pessimistic "conservative" assumption about human nature? (A.D. Gordon, an early utopian Zionist thinker, speculated that if the oppressed really wanted to liberate themselves, their problem would have been resolved long ago. The real problem, said Gordon, was that, often, the dream of the oppressed was to oppress others and the goal of the exploited was to exploit their fellows.) The bitter lesson that the social democrats learned, when they realized that improved living conditions and an enlightened society do not guarantee the creation of an improved and enlightened human being, should strengthen our awareness of the need for society to regulate and to limit the hunting grounds of lust and selfishness—to protect the weak and the needy. Not only should we work to prevent, by means of education and cautious legislation, the concentration of the wealth of nations in fewer and fewer hands, we ought to spread the wealth over the entire social grid.

How can we intervene without suppressing? How can we guide without trampling? Regulate without infringing on individual freedom? Encourage and protect without expanding bureaucracy? How can we refine our instincts for competition and achievement without stifling them?

As long as we remember that the end should not justify the means, we may have a possible starting point: neither the value of freedom nor the values of equality and justice should become idols. Neither the desire to generate economic prosperity through unrestrained competition nor the aspiration to protect the weak from every consequence of ruthless competitiveness should become a rite that subsumes all of life.

We must seek a balance.

Translated from the Hebrew by MAGGIE BARTURA □

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Susan George

HOW TO WIN THE WAR OF IDEAS

Lessons from the Gramscian Right

In Greek the *hegemon* is the leader, and from there it's just a linguistic hop, skip, and jump to the notion of rule, authority, and dominance expressed by the word "hegemony." Traditionally, the term was reserved for states. In the 1920s and 1930s, the great Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci took the concept further, using it to explain how one class could establish its leadership over others through ideological dominance. Whereas orthodox Marxism explained nearly everything by economic forces, Gramsci added the crucial cultural dimension. He showed how, once ideological authority—or "cultural hegemony"—is established, the use of violence to impose change can become superfluous.

Today, few would deny that we live under the virtually undisputed rule of the market-dominated, ultracompetitive, globalized society with its cortège of manifold iniquities and everyday violence. Have we got the hegemony we deserve? I think we have, and by "we" I mean the progressive movement, or what's left of it. Obviously I don't deny the impact of economic forces or of political events like the end of the cold war in shaping our lives and our societies, but here I intend to concentrate on the war of ideas that has been tragically neglected by the "side of the angels." Many public and private institutions that genuinely believe they are working for a more equitable world have contributed to the triumph of neoliberalism or have passively allowed this triumph to occur.

If this judgment sounds harsh, positive conclusions may still be drawn from it. The Rule of the Right is the result of a concerted, long-term ideological effort on the part of identifiable actors. If we recognize that a market-dominated, iniquitous world is neither natural nor inevitable, then it should be possible to build a counter-project for a different kind of world.

Exclusion and Ideology

The late twentieth century could be dubbed the Age of Exclusion. It's now clear that the "free market," which increasingly determines political and social as well as economic priorities, cannot embrace everyone. The market's job is not to provide jobs, much less social cohesion. It has no place for the growing numbers of people who contribute little or nothing to production or consumption. The market operates for the benefit of a minority.

The Age of Exclusion engenders myriad social ills with which various humanitarian and charitable agencies, established in an earlier era, vainly attempt to cope. Vainly, because they have failed to understand that their projects and programs exist in an ideological context that systematically frustrates their aims.

The now-dominant economic doctrine, of which widespread exclusion is a necessary element, did not descend from heaven. It has, rather, been carefully nurtured over decades, through thought, action, and propaganda; *bought and paid for* by a closely knit fraternity (they mostly *are* men) who stand to gain from its rule.

An earlier version of this doctrine was called "laissez-faire"; today Americans speak of neoconservatism, Europeans of neoliberalism, and the French of "*la pensée unique*" (the dominant or single mindset). I shall use

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"neoliberalism," bearing in mind that the modern version of the doctrine is far removed from that of such great "liberal" political economists as Adam Smith or David Ricardo. Neoliberals pretend to follow these illustrious predecessors, but in fact betray their spirit and ignore their moral and social teachings.

A Half Century of History

The victory of neoliberalism is the result of fifty years of intellectual work, now widely reflected in the media, politics, and the programs of international organizations. Reaganism, Thatcherism, and the Fall of the Wall are often credited (or blamed) for this state of affairs and they have, indeed, made neoliberals more arrogant, but there is much more to the story than that.

Fifty years ago, in the wake of World War II, neoliberalism had no place in the mainstream political debate. Its few champions preached to each other or in the desert—everyone else was a Keynesian, a social/Christian democrat or some shade of Marxist. Overturning that context required intellectual tenacity and political planning—but it also took the passivity of a self-satisfied majority. If there are three kinds of people—those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who never knew what hit them—neoliberals belong to the first category and most progressives to the latter two. The left remained complacent until, suddenly, it was too late.

The American founding fathers of neoliberalism thus held few cards at the outset, but they believed in a crucial principle: *Ideas Have Consequences*—the title of a 1948 book by Richard Weaver that was to have a long and fruitful career.

Weaver's conservative writings were published by the University of Chicago Press, as were the works of exiled Austrian philosopher-economist Friedrich von Hayek and the brilliant young economist Milton Friedman. Today the "Chicago School" is famous: its economic, social, and political views have spread throughout the world. In General Pinochet's Chile, Chicago-trained economists were the first to apply *el tratamiento de chock* (shock treatment) based on freedom for business but repression for labor.

Clearly, ideas have consequences—after all, Margaret Thatcher proudly proclaimed her allegiance to the ideas of Hayek, and most economics students who go on to occupy policy positions have been trained in the neoliberal curricula. One conservative scholar sums up the doctrine thus: "Individual freedom is the ultimate social ideal; governmental power, while necessary, must be limited and decentralized. Interventionism is baneful and dangerous. Economic freedom, that is, capitalism, is an indispensable condition for political liberty."

Neoliberals reject the notion that individual freedom might *depend* on democracy and the rule of law, guaranteed by the state. For them, such "guarantees" are nothing but chains. To be free is to be free *from* the state. The individual is entirely responsible for his economic and social fate; this implies that disparities will necessarily exist. But this is good. As Thatcher put it, "It is our job to glory in inequality and see that talents and abilities are given vent and expression for the benefit of us all."

In the early days of the neoliberal renaissance, such ideas may have seemed utopian, since they were antagonistic to the spirit of the New Deal and the welfare state. Neoliberals understood, however, that to transform the economic, political, and social landscape they first had to change the intellectual and psychological one. For ideas to become part of the daily life of people and society, they must be propagated through books, magazines, journals, conferences, professional associations, and so on. If some ideas are to become more fashionable than others, they must be financed: it takes money to build intellectual infrastructures and to promote a worldview.

When these foundations have been carefully laid and built upon, views that once seemed minoritarian, elitist, even morally repugnant will gradually become predominant, especially among decision makers. Press, radio, and television can be guided to follow the lead of the more specialized or erudite media. Imperceptibly, nearly everyone will come to feel that certain ideas are normal, natural, part of the air we breathe.

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Manufacturing Ideology

The neoliberals thus conceived their strategy, recruiting and rewarding thinkers and writers, raising funds to found and to sustain a broad range of institutions at the forefront of the "conservative revolution." This revolution began in the United States but, like the rest of American culture, has spread across the world. The doctrines of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization are indistinguishable from those of the neoliberal credo. Here are some capsule profiles of some of the most influential intellectual institutions or think tanks.

• The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) was founded in 1943 by a group of anti-New Deal businessmen. It pioneered intellectual public relations in the 1950s and 1960s, working directly with members of Congress, the federal bureaucracy, and the media. In the 1980s, AEI's average budget was $14 million; it employed some 150 people. One of its most successful fund-raising campaigns was launched by the Secretary of Defense in the Pentagon dining room. In the 1990s, the annual budget has dropped to around $8 to $10 million, but AEI still produces a steady stream of books, pamphlets, and legislative recommendations, and its pundits are frequently heard from in the mass media.

• The Heritage Foundation is the best known think tank because of its close association with Ronald Reagan. A week after his electoral victory, Heritage's director handed Reagan's staff a thousand-page document of policy advice, called *Mandate for Leadership*, the fruit of the labors of 250 neoliberal experts. Their recommendations were duly distributed throughout the new administration; most became law.

Heritage, the collective brain behind Reagan and George Bush, was founded in 1973, spends a third of its $18 million annual budget on marketing, and produces some two hundred documents a year. Its Annual Guide lists fifteen hundred neoliberal public policy experts in seventy different areas—the harried journalist need only telephone to get a quote. President Reagan himself launched a major Heritage fund-raising drive, telling the audience, "Ideas do have consequences: rhetoric *is* politics and words *are* action."

Heritage's success has inspired the creation of thirty-seven mini-Heritages across the United States, creating synergy, an illusion of diversity, and the impression that experts quoted actually represent a broad spectrum of views.

• Smaller think tanks include the venerable Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, founded at Stanford University in California in 1919 to study communism. In 1960, it added an economic program to its cold war vocation. The Cato Institute in Washington is libertarian, advocating minimalist government and specializing in studies on privatization; the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, founded in 1978 by William Casey, who later became director of the Central Intelligence Agency, specializes in the critique of government income-redistribution programs.

A revolving door between government and conservative think tanks allowed former Nixon or Reagan/Bush staffers to find homes outside of government during the Carter and Clinton presidencies (although one wonders why they needed to move: Clinton's position on welfare is virtually indistinguishable from that of the neoliberal think tanks, constituting another victory for them).

Outside the United States, the neoliberal network is less formal but no less effective. London houses the Centre for Policy Studies; the anti-statist Institute of Economic Affairs; and the Adam Smith Institute, which has probably done more to promote privatization than any other institution anywhere. The Adam Smith Institute brags that over two hundred measures developed in its "Omega Project" were put into practice by Thatcher. Its experts have also advised the World Bank extensively on privatization programs in the bank's client countries.

One of the most important think tanks has no fixed address. The Mount Pelerin Society. founded in 1947 by Friedrich von Hayek, first brought American and European conservatives together in a village near Lausanne. It has remained an international club for neoliberal thinkers ever since; its four-hundred strong membership met most recently in Vienna in 1996. Milton Friedman says that "Mount Pelerin

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showed us that we were not alone" and served as a "rallying point," inspiring friendships, networks, and joint projects. Membership in the society is by invitation and members' names are not disclosed; it is, however, known that Czech prime minister, Vaclav Klaus, the former French finance minister Alain Madelin, Boris Yeltsin's chief advisers, and Margaret Thatcher belong.

Financing Ideology

Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent over the past fifty years to keep these and many other neoliberal institutions alive and well. Where does the money come from?

In the early days, the William Volker Fund saved the shaky magazines, financed the books published at Chicago, paid the bills for the influential Foundation for Economic Education and funded meetings at U.S. universities. Americans at the first Mount Pelerin Society meeting traveled to Switzerland on Volker money.

This fund could not, however, cover all the needs of a growing movement, which sought other financial backers early on. The director of the American Enterprise Institute was jubilant when in 1972 he convinced the prestigious Ford Foundation to give AEI $300,000—a significant sum at the time. This grant opened doors to other institutional funders.

For at least a quarter-century, many conservative American family foundations have poured money into the production and dissemination of their ideas. Although smaller than philanthropic elephants like Ford, these funders use their money strategically. The Bradley Foundation spends nearly all its annual income ($28 million in 1994) on promoting neoliberal causes, including major gifts to Heritage, AEI, and conservative magazines and journals. As the Foundation's director puts it, "We're in this for the long haul." According to the Foundation's literature, the Bradley brothers believed that "over time, the consequences of ideas [are] more decisive than the force of political or economic movements."

Foundations like Coors (brewery), Scaife or Mellon (steel), and especially Olin (chemicals, munitions) finance chairs in some of America's most prestigious universities. Their occupants are carefully chosen, in the words of critic Jon Wiener, to "strengthen the economic, political and cultural institutions upon which . . . private enterprise is based." Olin has spent over $55 million on these efforts and the list of its grantees reads like a *Who's Who* of the academic right.

An anecdote recounted by Wiener illustrates how the ideological self-promotion system works. In 1988, Allan Bloom, director of the University of Chicago's Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy ($3.6 million grant from Olin) invites a State Department official to give a paper. The speaker proclaims total victory for the West and for neoliberal values in the cold war. His paper is immediately published in the *National Interest* ($1 million Olin subsidy) edited by Irving Kristol ($376,000 grant as Olin Distinguished Professor at New York University Graduate School of Business).

Kristol simultaneously publishes "responses" to the paper: one by himself, one by Bloom, one by Samuel Huntington ($1.4 million for the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard). This completely artificial, engineered "debate" is then picked up by the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and *Time* magazine. Today everyone has heard of Francis Fukuyama and *The End of History*, a best-seller in several languages.

Even in the early 1970s, William Simon, then and still president of the Olin Foundation, was exhorting his business associates to support "scholars, social scientists, writers and journalists" and to give "grants, grants and more grants in exchange for books, books and more books."

Simon knew what he was talking about: not only can well-targeted money create "debates" out of thin air; it can also define which areas deserve study and which do not; it can promote personal notoriety and ready access to decision makers and to the media for selected neoliberal spokespersons. The editor of the Heritage Foundation's *Policy Review* appears to find this almost unseemly:

> Journalism today is very different from what it was 10 to 20 years ago. Today, op-ed pages are dominated by conservatives. We have a tremendous amount of conservative opinion but this creates a problem for those who are interested in a career in journalism. . . . If Bill Buckley were to come out of Yale today, nobody would pay much attention to

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him. He would not be that unusual . . . because there are probably hundreds of people with those ideas and they have already got syndicated columns.

Between 1990 and 1993, four neoliberal U.S. magazines received $2.7 million from different foundations (*National Review*, the *Public Interest*, the *New Criterion*, and the *American Spectator*). In contrast, four progressive U.S. magazines with a national audience (the *Nation* the *Progressive*, *In These Times*, and *Mother Jones*) were given ten times less over the same period.

In the war of ideas, any movement is in trouble if it cannot renew its ranks of professional researchers, thinkers, and writers. Neoliberals don't mind financing white men if white men happen to be best at delivering the intellectual goods. But they are also funding a great many women, African-Americans, and other minority thinkers and writers; as well as dozens of college newspapers, thousands of graduate students, and a small armada of journals. Literally hundreds of millions of dollars are spent every year on purchasing present and future right-wing intellectual clout.

Who's Who, and What?

A somewhat astonishing conclusion can be drawn from all this: *the right is a hot-bed of Marxists*! Or at least of Gramscians. They know full well that we are not born with our ideas and must somehow acquire them; that in order to prevail, ideas require material infrastructures. They know, too, that these infrastructures will largely determine the intellectual superstructure: this is what Gramsci meant by capitalism's "hegemonic project." Defining, sustaining, and controlling culture is crucial: get into people's heads and you will acquire their hearts, their hands, and their destinies.

Alas, progressives can't seem to tell a hegemonic project from a hedgehog. What has the "side of the angels" been up to all these years? Has it spent its time and money promoting the ideas it believes in? Precious little. Not only do progressive institutions appear complacent as to their side's intellectual superiority, but they've been cruising along as if there were no need to justify their positions, nor even to worry about the nearly hegemonic intellectual hold of the right.

The "angels" have, rather, seen their task as funding projects and programs for the poor and disadvantaged; focusing on the grass roots, enhancing "community empowerment." Laudable goals all—but what happens when government subscribes, instead, to structural adjustment that utterly devastates the lives of the poor in the South, or passes antiwelfare, antiworker legislation in the North? What happens when the World Trade Organization has more to say about community survival than the communities themselves? Or when public funds for health, education, housing, transport, the environment, and so on dry up?

Without intellectual ammunition to defend them and to create the context in which they can flourish, worthy projects and programs collapse. They cannot exist in a vacuum.

Practical Implications and the Plague of the Project

So far, I've not bothered to declare an interest. I assume readers know or have guessed I have one, since I am a professional researcher, writer, and, when I can manage it, thinker. So yes: I have all too often heard or read the dread phrase: "Your proposal is very interesting but we don't fund research and writing."

The point is not private disappointment, but mass denial. Progressive donors have sent out vanloads of rejections in response to proposals for intellectual work. I have no reason to doubt that the goals of these donors are social equity, poverty alleviation, human rights, conflict resolution, and sustainable development. So I am mightily perplexed by their behavior.

Why, I'm driven to ask, do progressive funders devote so much of their time and money to "projects" and so little to intellectual infrastructure and institution building?

Why have we not learned from the single-mindedness of the right? Why can we not see, for example, that the destruction of welfare in the United States or the threats to trade union achievements in Europe would have been impossible without the creation of an *intellectual* climate making such onslaughts appear not morally repugnant but natural and inevitable?

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Why is the "project"' approach not seen as self-defeating? As neoliberalism dismantles the gains of the past fifty years and ever greater numbers of its victims are cast adrift, the pressure to fund only "projects" will grow, pushing us into a self-reinforcing procession toward the definitive dysfunctional society.

Just in Case . . .

In Spanish they say *no protestas sin propuestas* or, freely translated, quit complaining if you don't have anything to offer. Well, obviously I propose that progressive foundations and any other financing sources begin to devote large amounts of money to regaining our lost intellectual initiative. They should sit at the feet of the neoliberals who have proved they know how the game works: let us learn from the masters!

Assuming that this proposal is somehow recognized and acted upon, I have several subsidiary recommendations. The first may be a bit hard to swallow, so I may as well say it straight out: *funders are not the best judges of the work that progressive intellectuals ought to be doing.*

Why not? Because they are likely to be attracted to issues that have already reached the mainstream. I have witnessed this again and again, for instance when I first tried to attract financing for work on third world debt. It was then too early, although five or ten years later, numerous organizations were falling over each other to work on the issue. The task of the progressive thinker is to be *outside* the mainstream, to foresee developments that will become crucial in the future.

A good progressive intellectual worker produces subversive knowledge. This knowledge, by definition, will be unwelcome to the Establishment and to the mainstream. Yet someone does have to pay for the months or years of work before the books come out, before the "hot topics" are recognized and the "subversive knowledge" becomes part of the debate. *Funders should accept a division of labor and trust the intellectual workers they choose to support without trying to define their agendas.* Otherwise, they will inadvertently prevent those workers from doing their job.

Funders should give up the "project" approach in favor of institution building. Donors, understandably, want to discuss the substance and the politics of a project with the person who will be carrying it out. But for that person, this process can be counterproductive, preventing him or her from getting on with the intellectual work. Drafting several project proposals, defending them separately, in different countries, before different audiences, following up with correspondence, additional information, progress reports, accounts—all this is hugely time consuming.

When I was fund-raising for the Transnational Institute (on "projects," naturally, since no other approach would have been accepted in the donor community) I published only short pieces. Sustained endeavors like books are (at least for me) impossible when time is constantly broken up with fund-raising activities. Researchers, writers, and speakers who have to cater to this mentality in order to get any work done at all are prevented from devoting their energies to research, writing, and speaking, and from renewing their own arsenal of ideas. Project funding, as opposed to institution building, offers no hope for an end to the cycle of low productivity.

Donors should fund not just the intellectual work itself but the means for making sure it will be widely used. The Heritage Foundation spends fully a third of its comfortable budget on outreach, yet few progressive funders want to pay for spreading the word. Consequently, idea-producing institutions that are only allowed to spend for items specified in the project budget (with a modest overhead) can't afford translations, can't develop a "Features Service" for a network of newspapers and magazines in many countries, can't turn articles into radio programs, books into television films, and so on.

Grants for institution building are also important because they allow progressive researchers and writers to prepare for the future and keep up the momentum. Smart, dedicated, idealistic young people often want to work for progressive organizations and are willing to make material sacrifices to do so, but the core funds to employ them simply aren't there.

By focusing almost exclusively on projects, progressive funders have helped to ensure right-wing dominance of the debate. We used to laugh at the idea that market mechanisms could solve

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social problems: such things are now said every day with a straight face. Issues we used to take for granted, including the third world itself, have almost vanished from the debate.

Donors can make the leap of faith from projects to institutional and intellectual movement building. They can identify institutions and individuals in both North and South who are producing original and distinguished work and whose record shows they can be trusted—and then trust them. This includes research/policy institutes, journals, and independent intellectual workers inside or outside of universities.

Remarkable institutions and individuals deserve long-term support that alone can allow them to do their best work. *Donors should set aside a respectable portion of their disposable funds to endow worthwhile institutions.* Formulas providing guarantees and flexibility to both donor and recipient could be readily negotiated.

And Finally . . .

What if we lived in a society in which the system of justice rested on the postulate that only two-thirds of its members were fully human; the remaining third not deserving of the same rights, except when arbitrarily granted? Such a society would spontaneously and instantly—at least in the West—be called unjust.

The exclusion of a third or more of their members is, however, precisely the situation that obtains in societies regulated almost exclusively by the "laws of the market." There is a dangerous semantic slippage from "law" to "laws of the market"; from the body of democratically established rules for the proper functioning of society to the blind operation of economic forces. Neoliberals want "market law" to become the sovereign judge of the rights of persons and of societies as a whole.

Hegel claimed that the only thing history teaches us is that nobody ever learns anything from history. Recent history, if we are attentive, might still teach us that a society can go from law based on the equality of persons to the laws of the market; from relative social justice to deep and chronic inequalities within a few short years. The neoliberals' onslaught continues and their intellectual hegemony is almost complete. Those who refuse to act on the knowledge that ideas have consequences end up suffering them. □

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Robert A. Dahl

ON DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Citizen Panels and Medicare Reform

By offering three alternative proposals on Social Security, the report of the presidential advisory commission last January performed an unintended service to the country. It did exactly what commissions appointed to provide advice on complex policy questions ought to do. As a result of divisions of opinion within the commission, its members offered not one but three possible solutions, with a different assessment of the prospective advantages and disadvantages of each.

Inadvertently, the members of the commission revealed some important features of highly complex issues:

- All important government policies and decisions result in disadvantages that may or may not be outweighed by their advantages.
- How great the advantages and disadvantages are likely to be is a matter of considerable uncertainty.
- Advantages and disadvantages are never distributed equally among citizens.
- Every complex decision therefore rests on assumptions not only about facts but also, though these are usually implicit, about equity, fairness, justice, security, community, freedom, and other values.
- Consequently it is a profound mistake to believe that complex issues can be properly decided by experts relying on technical or "scientific" analysis and judgments.*

Though the presidential advisory commission complicates the task of the president and other political leaders, it should serve as a model to emulate, not to avoid. Yet if complex issues should not be decided by expert consensus, how should they be decided? In order to explore one possible answer to this question, I want to use Medicare as an example. Although Medicare is a part of the broader problem of an inadequate system of medical care in the United States, it is complicated enough in itself to justify separate treatment. A great many Americans are baffled by the complexity of the issue and experts are divided on solutions.

Why the System Doesn't Work

Unfortunately, in attempting to deal with such a complex issue we combine nineteenth-century political institutions with late-twentieth-century technologies of mass communication. The combination no longer serves us well.

During the nineteenth century, in the United States as in other countries traveling along the path toward democracy, an adequate level of public understanding of issues and a more or less democratic connection between the great bulk of the people and their government was provided by the historically novel combination of widespread literacy, extensive freedom of speech and press, political campaigns, electoral competition between individual candidates and political parties, free and fair elections, and a broad (though by twentieth-century criteria grossly limited) suffrage. Imperfect though these institutions were in some respects, they enabled popular governments to exist on a larger scale and to respond to the wants of more human beings than ever before in human history.

*These points are nicely demonstrated by Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson in *Democracy and Disagreement* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

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Yet in dealing with such a complex issue as health care, the institutions that served well enough in the nineteenth century function less well today. In fact, they function pretty badly.

Anyone who hoped that the 1996 campaign and elections would help the country resolve the issue of medical care must have been grievously disappointed. The future of medical care may be among the most serious long-run problems this country faces, but from the recent electoral contest one would not have learned much about it. The two major presidential candidates skirted the hard questions and shied away from genuine solutions. So did most of those running for seats in the House and Senate.

My concern here, however, is not with the systematic evasion of the problem by the candidates but with a difficulty that transcends campaign strategies. More ominous for the future is the inadequacy of our political institutions for dealing with highly complex policy questions for which solutions are not only unclear and highly controversial but seem likely to create costs or reduce benefits for important groups of citizens.

In addition to its inherent complexity, what further complicates the problem is the nature of the conflict over possible solutions. If the conflict were only between two presidential candidates, or a Democratic president and a Republican Congress, or a majority and a minority of Americans, campaigns and elections might provide a solution. The difficulty is that a good deal of the conflict is *within* the individual voters themselves.

A substantial majority of voters appear to want a balanced budget, no increase in taxes, and levels of health care, particularly Medicare, maintained pretty much as they are. Yet behind the apparent support for these goals lurk two formidable questions: (1) Can the first two goals—a balanced budget and no increase in taxes—be achieved without sacrificing present levels of health care? (2) If not, what priorities and trade-offs would a majority of Americans prefer? Most Americans seem to be deeply perplexed about their answers to these questions. Given the state of political debate and discussion, they have every right to be.

Our existing institutions for helping the public to gain informed answers to these questions are not helpful. For example, they encouraged Republicans to claim that the 1994 elections gave them a mandate to balance the budget and even to cut taxes; but when pressed about the consequences for Medicare, they generally fudged their answers or came up with vague, unexamined solutions. The president and many congressional Democrats have, in practice, opposed attempts to reduce current levels of Medicare; but typically they remain evasive about long-run consequences for the budget and taxes.

Few people contest the proposition that spending for health care cannot indefinitely increase at its recent rate. In presenting options for reducing the deficit in June of 1995, the Congressional Budget Office argued that even though growth in expenditures for Medicare and Medicaid had slowed somewhat, spending on these two programs "is still projected to rise by 10 percent a year through 2005." Some of the country's best-qualified experts, though in agreement that this projected rate of annual increase cannot be sustained, contend that satisfactory levels of health care can be assured with annual increases in expenditures of less than 10 percent. But to do so, they argue, would require radical changes in policies and programs.

Anything other than a temporary truce in the debate over Medicare will require that a majority of American voters and their elected representatives be able to make an informed choice among the alternatives. To do that, however, they will need to acquire a better understanding of the long-run consequences of alternative health-care solutions. How can that goal be achieved?

A Proposal

The proposal I offer is based on three assumptions. First, building on our existing institutions and technology for public enlightenment, we need to develop a process that would reduce the influence of political rhetoric and obfuscation and increase the opportunities available to citizens and elected politicians for reflecting, deliberating, and making hard choices about the basic alternatives and their consequences for

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widely shared goals and values.

The process I propose would not so much replace other political practices as supplement them. It would not be useful for *initiating* policy proposals or pushing them to the center of political debate, discussion, and public awareness. It would come into play *after* the standard institutions persistently failed to produce a solution to a highly complex problem on which the views of the general public provide no clear or adequate guide.

Second, although I offer this proposal as a solution, honesty requires that we also think of it as an experiment. Will it work? Will it be successful? Although I strongly believe so, it is impossible to know with a high degree of certainty. Yet unless and until we try the experiment we will never know. My third assumption, therefore, is: let us make sure that even if the experiment fails to accomplish as much as we might hope, it will have done no harm and may have done some good.

A process of public enlightenment would consist of five stages:

Stage I: A nonpartisan commission of experts would be assigned the task of producing a clear presentation on two highly controversial matters. First, they would describe fully and carefully three or four of *the major alternative solutions*, their advantages, disadvantages, and trade-offs. Second, and related to the first, they would present the best estimates of the long-run costs of each.

No doubt the first reaction of many readers will be to reject the idea. The disastrous report of President Clinton's White House task force on health care may appear to argue against yet another commission.

However, the body I have in mind would differ from that ill-fated task force, and indeed from other similar commissions, in several fundamental respects:

- It would be explicitly expert and nonpartisan. To achieve this end, the president would invite the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to form a Commission on Medicare Alternatives. Its members would be appointed by the president of NAS and it would operate under the aegis of the NAS. Such an assignment fits precisely with the nature and functions of the NAS. It was established in 1863 by an act of Congress to advise the federal government without fee on any question of science and technology. The 1,600 or so members of NAS are distinguished scholars from all branches of the sciences, engineering, medicine, and the social sciences who have been elected to the Academy by their peers. Because of the way its members are selected the NAS is highly independent of political influences, and throughout its long existence it has produced many important reports.

- Unlike most commissions appointed to inquire into a problem, the Commission on Medicare Alternatives would *not recommend a solution*. In fact, its terms should explicitly forbid it to do that. As I mentioned earlier, President Clinton's advisory commission on Social Security has inadvertently provided a model. The sole task of a commission on Medicare would be to produce a clear and concise summary of the major alternatives and their projected costs.

- The commission's goal would be to produce a public report with the greatest measure of comprehensibility, clarity, and simplicity attainable within the limits of intellectual honesty and responsibility.

Indeed, the commission should explore ways by which the report could be readily understood by audiences at different levels of proficiency in dealing with intellectually complex matters. After all, our citizens range from those with only elementary education to Ph.D.s and beyond, and they are all equally entitled to know where their interests, and those of the country, lie. We need to be more creative in developing alternative ways of responsibly presenting basic information, analysis, and argument. Consequently, the staff of the commission should expore the possibilities of employing different media and a variety of technologies for presenting information attuned to the capacities of different citizens.

Stage II: Shortly after the report appears, a scientifically selected sample of about six hundred adult American citizens would assemble to deliberate on the commission's report for, say, five days. The selection and procedures of the

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group would follow the design of the Deliberative Poll created by James Fishkin at the University of Texas. Such a Deliberative Poll has twice taken place in Britain, the first time focusing on the issue of crime, the second time on Britain's relationship with Europe. In January 1996, six hundred eligible voters who had been selected as a representative sample of the American electorate met for four days in Austin to deliberate on national issues on the eve of the presidential campaign.

These three trials have demonstrated, I believe, that the deliberative poll is the new kind of political institution that democracies urgently need if they are to deal more successfully with complex issues of public policy. (Let me declare an interest: I served on the Advisory Committee for the National Issues Convention.)

What distinguishes a deliberative poll from an ordinary public opinion survey is that, as the name suggests, citizens actually *deliberate* over an issue. They break into small discussion groups, meet with experts and politicians, and then form their conclusions. Experience so far shows that by the end of their meetings many of the participants arrive at judgments significantly different from those they held at the outset. In short, they actually learn something. The purpose of a deliberative poll, then, is not to reflect public opinion more accurately or to duplicate the effects of political campaigns on citizens' information (and misinformation). On the contrary, it is intended to provide a forum in which a small cross section of American voters can consider and reconsider their opinions *after* discussion, deliberation, and opportunities to acquire new information and understanding.

Because the choices registered in a Deliberative Poll are, in effect, those that other Americans *would* be likely to make if they had the same opportunity to deliberate over the issues, the judgments of the citizens who participate are significant, even legitimate, in a way that no ordinary public opinion survey is. They would probably be about as close to the enlightened judgments of American citizens as a whole as we can possibly obtain—and more enlightened, certainly, than the opinions reflected in a standard opinion survey.

Consequently, though politicians could choose to ignore these judgments, they would have some explaining to do. What is more, a deliberative poll would make it considerably more difficult for elected politicians to manufacture a spurious "mandate" that contradicted the conclusions reached in the poll.

Stage III: On the heels of the first Deliberative Poll on Medicare, similar exercises would take place in selected localities throughout the country.

For organizing these local polls, more expertise is available than one might suppose—for example, in social science departments at nearby colleges and universities. Local polls following upon deliberation are by no means a radically new idea. For many years the Jefferson Center in Minneapolis has assembled small but randomly selected "Citizen Juries" to deliberate on issues of local, state, and national importance. Several years ago, observing members of a Citizen Jury discussing the subject of public education in New Haven, I was impressed once again with the knowledge, relevant experience,

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good sense, civility, and capacity for learning from one another that ordinary American citizens can display when they are provided an opportunity to do so.

One can make some educated guesses about the number of citizens who might become much better informed and more deeply involved as a result of their deliberations. If at least one full-scale Deliberative Poll were held in every state and several in larger states, somewhere between twenty-five thousand and fifty thousand citizens would be engaged. Judging from the trials so far, they would not only develop much more informed judgments about the issue but would also acquire a high level of sustained interest in it. If we add those who had previously been engaged and informed during Stage I, it is not too much to expect that the first three stages would have helped to create a critical mass of informed citizens whose views would be highly influential in all later public discussion of Medicare.

Stage IV: Once the report of the Commission on Medicare Alternatives and the results of national and local deliberative polls were available, a period of more vigorous public debate and discussion could be expected to follow. The solutions reported by the Commission on Medicare Alternatives would furnish a ready agenda for debate and discussion by politicians, commentators, ordinary citizens, and others. Confronted by the major alternatives, their costs, advantages, and disadvantages, it would be more difficult for politicians to gloss over hard choices. The Deliberative Polls would provide reliable evidence as to how ordinary citizens respond to those choices. And as I have already said, "the public" would now contain a critical mass of citizens with a better grasp of the alternatives.

Stage V: Finally, then, after the period of public debate and discussion, the president would meet with congressional leaders to negotiate a long-run solution.

Is It Worth a Try?

Would such a process really make a difference? On a complex issue like Medicare is it possible to develop a more enlightened public opinion that would provide the ground for political decisions?

Perhaps not. But if not, then the prospects for dealing with complex public policy issues by democratic processes are dreary indeed. And not just with regard to health care. Complexity in public policy is not only here to stay; it will probably increase.

For some complex issues at least, the old processes developed in the nineteenth century and adapted (for the worse, perhaps?) to late-twentieth-century technologies of communication no longer work. Before we come to the pessimistic conclusion that democracy can do no better, or even yield to the tempting but illusory hope that we had better just turn these issues over to experts and politicians to decide for us, surely we should try out some new arrangements for improving public understanding.

Complex questions of public policy are not going to go away. Our democratic political institutions don't currently serve us well, but they also don't need radical surgery. With innovations such as those I have proposed here, we can make them serve us better. □

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Douglas W. Payne

WHY DRUG TRAFFICKERS LOVE FREE TRADE

Laredo, Texas, the busiest land port between the United States and Mexico, offers an intimate view of the marriage between illegal narcotics and free trade. Along the Rio Grande, U.S. law enforcement officials refer to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as the "North American Free Trafficking Agreement." But in Washington, amid finger-pointing about who's soft on drugs, no one on either side of the aisle wants to admit that nothing favors drug traffickers more than the nature of the modern global economy itself.

Last winter I stood on the Juarez-Lincoln bridge, enveloped in the exhaust fumes of trucks backed up five miles into Mexico. As the line of eighteen-wheelers inched toward U.S. Customs, I wondered which ones held hidden caches of drugs. Despite stepped-up border inspections since 1995, U.S. officials concede that more than 90 percent of the cocaine and heroin shipped through Mexico from South America gets past them.

Since NAFTA began, Mexican exports to the United States have more than doubled and at least 85 percent moves by truck through fifteen border crossings between Brownsville, Texas, and San Diego. Nearly two million trucks a year now enter at Laredo alone. Mexican traffickers will capitalize on this year's opening to cross-border busing and the linkage of the U.S. and Mexican rail systems through railroad privatization in Mexico. Coming next is the North America Superhighway, a joint project between Washington, Ottawa, and Mexico City that will allow commercial vehicles to travel straight through from Mexico to Canada and back.

A short walk from the Juarez-Lincoln bridge is downtown Laredo, a gritty jumble of bargain stores, businesses, and take-out joints, which seem all the more shabby next to the banks, the main beneficiaries of the trade explosion. Some are new, gleaming glass and metal structures, while the old Laredo National Bank has been redone in elegant *hacienda* style, its interior adorned by the finest Mexican art. Laredo National was purchased in 1994 by Carlos Hank Rhon, scion of one of Mexico's most powerful families. A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* referred to the bank as "a virtual poster boy for the North American Free Trade Agreement."

Carlos Hank Gonzalez, the family patriarch, made himself a billionaire during a career in government, which he explained by saying, "A politician who is poor is a poor politician." Carlos Hank Rhon, his oldest son, was a college classmate of Raúl Salinas, brother of former Mexican president Carlos Salinas. Years back, he recommended Raúl to his private banker at Citibank in New York, and provided the initial two million dollars Raúl used to open an account.

Raúl Salinas was jailed in Mexico in 1995 on murder and corruption charges. Since then the U.S. Justice Department has been trying to determine whether $120 million siphoned out of Mexico and into secret offshore accounts by Citibank on Raúl's behalf is drug money, and whether any passed through Laredo National. Swiss investigators said in April they had already concluded that the more than $100 million Raúl had on deposit in their country's banks was largely provided by drug traffickers. The Hank family itself is under investigation by U.S.

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law enforcement, suspected of acting as a link between the Mexican ruling party and Mexico's powerful drug federations.

Raúl's globe-spanning portfolio was discovered only because the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) convinced Swiss banking officials that there were strong indications an account it was monitoring was used to hide drug money. The account turned out to be Raúl's, although his personal money manager at Citibank had opened it for him under a false name.

Carlos Hank Rhon now wants to acquire Mercantile Bank, the principal financial institution in Brownsville, which would make him owner of the third largest bank holding company in Texas. The U.S. Federal Reserve, which approved his purchase of Laredo National without question in 1994, was in April still considering his application to buy Mercantile.

Laredo provides but a snapshot of borderless crime in the borderless economy. According to an estimate by the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the global trade in illegal drugs is now a $500 billion-a-year industry—a figure equal to international trade in telecommunications, greater than international trade in oil, and dwarfing the gross domestic products of nearly all nations.

Still, even the best-equipped specialists cannot truly measure the extent of the problem. This is not simply because of the illicit, secretive nature of the drug trade itself, but because drug trafficking and money laundering have become so enmeshed with everyday commerce and financial transactions in a globalized economy that it has become nearly impossible to distinguish the illicit from the legitimate.

Drugs now find their way to market commingled with other commodities in vast networks of air freight and container shipping by sea and land. Today, there are more than five hundred companies worldwide transporting containers in giant seagoing vessels, with more than twenty million container slots available per year. Customs agencies in the industrialized world are overwhelmed, and most in the developing world have been corrupted by traffickers to one degree or another.

At the same time, billions in dirty profits disappear into an array of front companies and interconnected financial institutions that operate in secrecy in tax havens around the world, and that are able to span nations at the click of a computer mouse twenty-four hours a day. Once drug money has been "layered" through multiple financial transactions in several countries, its origins are virtually untraceable.

If a drug trafficker or money launderer were asked what are the optimum conditions for conducting their operations, the answer would be low trade barriers, deregulation, relaxed international banking standards, border-erasing technology, and weak rule of law. Those are the prevailing trends or conditions in the world today, and every means the worlds of business and finance have to offer, linked by wireless and fax transmissions, are today used by traffickers and the managers of their illicit proceeds.

This is why vast international criminal organizations now compete for preeminence in the global economy with such outfits as Nike, Sony, and Shell. The top tier includes the Colombian and Mexican trafficking federations, the Sicilian Mafia, the Russian and Turkish Mafias, the ethnic-Chinese Triads, the Japanese Yakuza, and the distribution networks operating under the wing of Nigeria's military rulers. After the Sicilians and the Colombians paved the way at a 1987 summit on the island of Aruba, international crime groups achieved a level of collaboration described by Italy's late crime fighter Judge Giovanni Falcone as "a kind of operational melding."

All utilize professional money managers culled from the world's finest business schools to make market assessments, study trade patterns, and stay on top of the latest innovations in global finance and investment. They are, as a former U.S. intelligence official says, "the virtual corporation touted by management theorists as the leading contender for the dominant entrepreneurial structure of the next century."

The Russian Mafia, for example, is actually a collection of three thousand to four thousand criminal groups that feed on Russia's practically unregulated market economy, gather strength from close ties to government officials and

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former communist intelligence networks, and have little to fear from Russia's dysfunctional legal system. Capitalizing on expanding East-West trade, they have spread drug-smuggling and money-laundering tentacles throughout Europe, Asia, the United States, and the Americas.

Russian crime groups now control a significant portion of Russian banks—up to 25 percent of Moscow's banks alone, according to a source cited by the U.S. State Department last year—and have been laundering drug proceeds for the Colombians and the Sicilians since the early 1990s.

With no bureaucratic hurdles or budgetary limitations, international criminal enterprises are always at least a generation ahead of law enforcement when it comes to high-tech gadgets, computers, and software. Colombian traffickers plugged into GPS—Global Position Satellites—as soon as the technology became commercially available. GPS is a world-wide system of two dozen satellites developed by the Pentagon. It gives anyone with the proper receiver the ability to locate a precise longitude and latitude. It allows traffickers to make pinpoint drug drops to awaiting fast boats on the high seas without having to use the types of communications that can be intercepted by U.S. intelligence.

More drug money either originates or flows through the United States than anywhere else in the world. The DEA says that at least three-quarters of Latin American drug proceeds are laundered through New York City. Much of it actually passes through a room just blocks from the DEA's office near Manhattan's meat-packing district. But the DEA cannot touch it, let alone stop it.

Beyond the anonymous doors of a plain concrete-and-glass building overlooking the Hudson River is the privately owned Clearing House Interbank Payments System, or CHIPS. The public is normally kept out, but a few years ago reporters for the *Miami Herald* were allowed in. CHIPS is a giant computer room that holds two Unisys super processors. An exact replica with duplicate computers exists across the Hudson in New Jersey and can quickly be brought on line in the event a terrorist attack or natural disaster takes out the New York facility. Banks around the globe are linked by phone line, computer, and satellite into any of the 142 New York banks that act as their U.S. representative. Special underground cables link the New York banks to CHIPS.

When a bank in, say, Mexico wants to move U.S. dollars to a bank in Hong Kong or the Cayman Islands, it generates an electronic signal that flashes by satellite or ocean cable to its representative bank in New York. Computers at the New York bank read the signal and then alert CHIPS to make a transfer of funds between the banks. The transfer is made in an instant.

CHIPS has two counterparts in Europe, the Belgium-based Society of Worldwide Interbank Financial Communications, or SWIFT, and the British CHAPS. Through these three centers, well over two trillion dollars travels in the form of electronic messages every day, more than half moving in and out of the United States alone. In the hands of a professional money manager, ill-gotten gains can become untraceable in a matter of seconds.

The only hurdle is getting the dirty cash into the global banking system. Washington was slow to focus on money laundering because the Reagan White House did not want to irritate the U.S. banking lobby. For years, the law requiring that banks report transactions of over $10,000 was barely enforced. Not until 1986, when Congress finally passed a stronger federal statute against money laundering, could traffickers no longer deposit laundry bags of cash into a bank without the Internal Revenue Service being informed.

Now, the traffickers simply haul the cash out of the country, using the same means through which the drugs are smuggled in. Just as millions of cargo containers enter the U.S. every year, millions leave. With Customs applying most of its resources to detecting drugs—it still inspects fewer than 3 percent of containers coming in—traffickers ship cash out by the ton.

To move either cash or drugs the traffickers have established their own interconnecting import-export companies that act as fronts by engaging in legitimate business. The ethnic-Chi-

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nese Triads and the Sicilians are masters at this, and the Colombians have learned well from them. Traffickers have also formed networks to move cash through postal money orders or directly through the mail and overnight delivery. They even haul it by all-terrain vehicles across remote areas of the Mexican and Canadian borders. Once in Mexico, or most anywhere in the third world, the cash can be deposited easily. Money-laundering laws are either nonexistent or, as in Mexico, weak and rarely enforced.

In 1989 the G-7 countries established the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to promote international cooperation against money laundering. But the FATF only can recommend that governments tighten lax controls, and try to shame them by publicizing questionable practices. It has had little success. After eight years, Canada still does not have mandatory bank-reporting requirements, nor does it impose cross-border currency reporting. Traffickers find Canada almost as attractive as Mexico for placing drug money into the international financial system. If Canada, a G-7 member, is unwilling to cooperate, the FATF can hardly expect to improve oversight in corrupt, money-laundering bastions like Venezuela, Thailand, India, or the United Arab Emirates.

Bank secrecy laws and tax havens provide the ultimate nesting grounds for dirty money. Switzerland is the central star in a global constellation of nearly fifty of these financial *entrepôts*. Last year the FATF praised new money-laundering laws adopted by the Swiss. The first big test came this past March, after a painstaking investigation exposed a senior banker who had managed the Swiss accounts of Colombian drug traffickers for nearly fifteen years. In a decision that must have pleased no one more than the traffickers themselves, a Swiss court found the banker not guilty of money laundering, but ordered him to return the $1.1 million he earned for managing the Colombians' accounts.

In his State of the Union message last January, President Clinton promised "the largest antidrug effort ever." Nothing new there. Every president since Richard Nixon has declared a war on drugs, each has outspent his predecessor, yet by the end of every administration the drug trade had expanded. Still, the Clinton White House continues to emphasize the same failed strategies—stopping drugs through interdiction and greater punishment for dealers. Even drug czar General Barry McCaffrey, former head of the U.S. Southern Command in Panama, conceded upon his appointment in 1996 that years of law-enforcement and military efforts in Latin America had not made an "operational difference," affecting neither the supply nor the price of drugs on America's streets.

A year later McCaffrey was reduced to threatening physicians in Arizona and California who prescribe marijuana for medicinal purposes and laboring to explain why the White House certified Mexico as cooperating on drugs after McCaffrey's Mexican counterpart was found to be in the pay of Mexico's most powerful drug lord.

Drug certification was instituted in 1986 by a U.S. Congress incensed by the killing of DEA agent Kiki Camarena in Mexico and the cocaine death of American basketball star Len Bias. It mandates that the White House certify annually that drug-producing and drug-transit countries are cooperating fully with U.S. antidrug efforts. Decertified countries are subject to economic sanctions.

Certification has been no more effective than anything else in Washington's anti-drug arsenal, but it points up a fundamental contradiction in U.S. policy. Initially, U.S. antidrug efforts were subordinated to cold war politics. For example, General Manuel Noriega's narco-state in Panama avoided censure because it supported U.S. *contra* policy in Nicaragua, and was not sanctioned until Noriega turned on Washington and cozied up to Cuba and the Sandinistas.

Since the end of the cold war, drug policy has been subordinated to the primacy of geocommercialism under the Bush and Clinton administrations. If a drug-ridden country has liberalized trade and finance and has been targeted by the Treasury Department, the Commerce Department, and mutual fund managers as a key emerging market, it is virtually assured of being certified. That is why certification of drug-infested countries like Mexico, Malaysia, and Brazil is

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no more in doubt than China's Most-Favored-Nation status, while the pariah list is normally limited to such countries as Afghanistan, Myanmar (Burma), and Syria.

In the case of Mexico, the Bush and Clinton administrations covered up the true extent of drug-trade penetration so as not to provide ammunition to NAFTA opponents, as was initially reported in 1995 by the Mexican daily *El Financiero*, and later by the *New York Times*. Since the early 1990s the DEA has pressed during annual interagency meetings to decertify Mexico. Last year, even the State Department considered the middle option—decertification but with a waiver to suspend economic sanctions. But the Treasury Department prevailed with the argument that anything less than full certification of Mexico would be considered a no-confidence vote by global markets and jeopardize NAFTA. Given the certification of Mexico yet again this year, it seems that Treasury still has the last word.

Congress can overturn a White House certification with a majority vote in both houses. Ultimately, it does not matter, because there is no evidence that decertifying a country produces results. In 1996 the Clinton administration finally decertified Colombia, partly to cover itself on Mexico during an election campaign. But President Ernesto Samper, whose election was financed by more than $6 million from the Cali Cartel, remains defiantly in power, while coca crops, from which cocaine is produced, increased nearly a third by 1997.

President Samper and Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo claim the certification process interferes in their nations' sovereign affairs. But the principal threat to Colombia's and Mexico's sovereignty is the drug trade itself, which has exploited systemic corruption in those countries to penetrate virtually all public institutions and undermine the integrity of the economy. Samper and Zedillo do have a case, however, when they criticize the United States for being the largest market for illegal drugs.

For Washington to turn around more than three decades of antidrug futility it needs to adopt two new approaches. It is doubtful it will seriously consider either. The first is to apply substantially more resources to drug treatment, education, and prevention. Numerous studies, including one by the Pentagon-friendly Rand Corporation, have shown that a concerted effort in these areas can begin to significantly reduce drug consumption.

Under Reagan and Bush 70 percent of antidrug spending went to law enforcement and supply reduction, and 30 percent to demand reduction. In 1992 candidate Clinton vowed to greatly expand treatment and prevention. But once in office he caved into attacks by Republicans that he was soft on drugs. Under Clinton the spending ratio has changed hardly at all. His proposed 1997 budget does call for some increase in treatment and prevention, but the Republicans are bound to fight them. Even if Washington made a substantial commitment to demand reduction it would have to be sustained for at least a generation to substantially shrink consumption, given how deeply entrenched drugs are in U.S. society.

The other approach would begin by acknowledging how the global drug juggernaut actually functions, followed by a reconsideration of commercialism as the driving force of U.S. foreign policy. The kind of questions that need to be raised if U.S. drug policy is to be something other than an expensive sham would include the following:

Is it wise to form a trade pact with a country like Mexico where drug corruption is endemic? Or to thrust a market economy upon a country like Russia when it does not have a legal framework that can keep powerful criminal organizations at bay? Is bank secrecy truly necessary for achieving economic growth and development?

Such questions threaten powerful interests. The slightest suggestions along these lines are denounced by those who gain most from the so-called "Washington consensus" in favor of free trade and unregulated markets before all else. Gary Jacobs, the president of Carlos Hank Rhon's Laredo National Bank, for example, said to *El Financiero* just before I arrived in town, "Anti-drug policy must not be carried out at the expense of trade."

Interestingly, some of the principal proponents of a deregulated global economy now ar-

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gue that drugs should be legalized. It used to be that legalization champions were found mostly in counterculture circles and among the readers of *High Times*. The leaders of the new legalization lobby include Milton Friedman, George Shultz, and the editors of the *Economist* and *Latin Trade*, a glossy Miami-based monthly. Their attraction to legalization is understandable. It would rid them of having to answer nettlesome questions about how the global economy facilitates the drug trade, and it dovetails with the view that the laws of supply and demand supersede the laws made by men and women.

These advocates seem to have dismissed the ominous implications of legalization set out in a number of recent studies. Joseph Califano, for example, former cabinet official in the Carter administration and president of the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, has concluded that "legalizing drug use would write off millions of minority Americans, especially children and drug-exposed babies, whose communities are most under siege by drugs."

For the time being, the prospects are that little will change in Washington regarding drug policy. Perhaps the jolt of some drug-related financial or political disaster might stimulate new thinking. More likely, the globalized economy will become an increasingly lawless one, to the benefit of multinational enterprises from Cali and Sicily to Zurich and Wall Street. □

To Our Contributors

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(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article. We will not consider manuscripts submitted simultaneously to several publications.

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(5) We're usually quick in giving editorial decisions. If there's a delay, it's because a few editors are reading your article.

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THE EDITORS □

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David L. Kirp

LOOK BACK IN ANGER

Hemophilia, Rights, and AIDS

On a warm afternoon in the autumn of 1996, a limousine pulled up at the gates of the Bayer AG plant in Berkeley, California, and a handful of young men piled out of the car, megaphones to the ready. "We are here to take your name away!" they shouted. "I.G. Farben, I.G. Farben, Zyklon B, Zyklon B"—an unsubtle reference to the lethal gas manufactured by the German pharmaceutical house and used to chilling effect in the Holocaust—"four thousand dead, four thousand dead, four thousand dead." A cameraman recorded the scene, preparing "great source tape" for television stations to air.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, similar "zaps" were regularly launched by AIDS activists against drug companies. Then, the demonstrators were mainly young gay men, members of ACT-UP, protesting the pricing practices of pharmaceutical houses that made AZT and other drugs unaffordable to many people with AIDS. Though the focus of the 1996 protest remained AIDS, the protesters were hemophiliacs, not homosexuals. A few years earlier, they would have praised the drug company for manufacturing Factor VIII, the blood-clotting concentrate that enabled them to lead normal lives, but this lifeline had proved to be the source of HIV contamination. Consequently, more than half of those with severe or moderate hemophilia were infected with the deadly virus; and, since many nations relied on U.S. suppliers for blood-clotting products, similar calamities were reported not just in the United States but across the globe.

A tragic accident, the pharmaceutical houses called it, but to many hemophilia activists these casualties were the inevitable result of decisions driven by corporate greed.

Out of the nightmare of AIDS a new social movement has emerged. Not only in the United States but in scores of nations, people with hemophilia, historically quiescent, became a vocal group with an identity, an animus and a strategy. Their anger has been directed at firms like Bayer, which manufactured Factor VIII, as well as at governments, for their supposed failure to warn of the danger; at their doctors, who, they asserted, misled them; and even at their own organizations, which allegedly minimized the risk of exposure to HIV. This newly energized movement has demanded compensation from drug companies and governments, as well as apologies for wrong-doing and justice in the criminal courts.

In the midst of the AIDS devastation, people with hemophilia have claimed a degree of control over their own lives, and in so doing, they have obliged governments and transnational corporations to take them very seriously. While this is good news, there is also another, less noticed and less happy, tale to be told—about the fissioning of the AIDS-infected universe along the fault line of the deserving and the undeserving, the innocent and the guilty.

Historically, people with hemophilia were united only in stigma and suffering. The first scientific advance came in 1941, with the separation of plasma from whole blood, which meant that people with hemophilia could be treated without the many complications of ordinary blood transfusions; until then, there had been no way to replenish Factor VIII, the protein in blood plasma, absent in people with hemophilia,

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that helps blood to clot. This was only modest progress, however, because the plasma treatment was painful and protracted, keeping many hemophiliacs from holding steady jobs and obliging them to depend on welfare. A generation later, when the first blood-clotting product, cryoprecipitate, became available, things changed dramatically. One dose of cryoprecipitate contains Factor VIII drawn from five to fifteen donors, not just one, and the treatment is faster, infinitely less painful, and far more effective than the administration of whole plasma. This was a major advance—still, many hemophilia sufferers hoped for more than an approximation of normality. Hemophilia is an inherited disease that strikes only males, and young men in particular had a hard time coming to terms with their genetic inheritance. They wanted to be entirely normal—to be able, as the director of the French Hemophilia Association said, to climb Mont Blanc.

Factor VIII concentrate, which first came on the market in 1970, held out the hope of total liberation. Unlike cryoprecipitate, this blood product could be kept at home without refrigeration, and could be used prophylactically. It revolutionized the lives of hemophilia sufferers, as school and work became taken-for-granted activities. But the very reason the concentrate is so effective, the fact that a single dose is drawn from thousands of donors, is also why it posed potentially grave risks—why the gift of life could also be a poisoned gift. The possible dangers became evident soon after the concentrate went on the market, when substantial quantities were found to be contaminated with hepatitis B.

Then, a decade later, came the advent of AIDS. Although this mysterious new disease, identified in 1981, was originally believed to affect only gay men (the U.S. Centers for Disease Control initially referred to this condition as GRID, gay-related immune deficiency), within a year the first cases of blood-borne transmission were being reported. Yet instead of switching back to cryoprecipitate, with its far lower risk of contamination, most people with hemophilia continued, fatefully as it turned out, to rely on the concentrate until the middle of the 1980s. The professionally run organizations that spoke on behalf of people with hemophilia were chiefly concerned about maintaining the widespread availability of Factor VIII concentrate, and so were inclined to minimize the AIDS risk. There was only the remotest possibility that tainted blood was used, these spokespersons averred, and that threat was outweighed by the risks of diminished mobility for people with hemophilia denied access to Factor VIII concentrate. In arguing that hemophilia sufferers preferred the risk, presumably minute, of being exposed to contaminated blood to the loss of access to Factor VIII concentrate, the specialists made risk calculations on behalf of their clients—calculations that turned out to be terribly wrong.

'J'accuse'

By the mid-1980s, as the death toll mounted among people with hemophilia exposed to the virus through blood transfusions and Factor VIII concentrate, the victims' anger crescendoed. In modern societies, which purport to be able to manage risk, such calamities are not regarded fatalistically, but instead invite a search for causes and culprits.

Hemophilia groups had long been dominated by the medical and pharmaceutical establishments, and consequently reacted cautiously to the news of tainted Factor VIII. Commenting in 1983 on one drug company's decision to withdraw a batch of Factor VIII, the U.S. National Hemophilia Foundation declared: "It is not the role of the NHF to judge the appopriateness of corporate decisions made by individual pharmaceutical companies. . . . [Such corporate decisions] *should not* cause anxiety or changes in treatment programs." (Emphasis added.) At the international level, so substantial was the dependency of the medical specialists on their pharmaceutical patrons that until its 1994 conference, the World Federation of Hemophilia forbade any public criticism of the drug companies.

In country after country, newly energized people with hemophilia shattered these cozy arrangements, seizing control from the supposed experts. At the outset of the epidemic, the French Hemophilia Association had adopted a policy of quiet diplomacy and backdoor overtures to

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government, in order "not to have hemophiliacs talked about" and not "to accuse either doctors or the State"; an activist splinter group, the French Hemophilia Association of Poly-Transfused Persons, brought charges against the blood banks and the French Hemophilia Association as well. In the United States, the insurgent Committee of 10,000 issued a scathing report, "The Trail of AIDS in the Hemophilia Community," drawn from documents discovered in legal proceedings, which summarized "evidence that demands a verdict" against, among others, the established hemophilia organization.

These newly energized groups turned to tactics that, although the staples of other social movements, were anathema to traditionalists. In Holland, usually known for its consensual manner of decision making, a debate over the purity of the blood supply became known as "Bloody Sunday" for its acrimony. Doctors and people with hemophilia in Denmark split over the propriety of a confrontationist strategy, and the fact that the chairman of the Danish association's medical committee was also a blood products manufacturer became a point of controversy. The Canadian Hemophilia Society, in the words of its president, started "crying scandal" on behalf of self-styled "victims," as people with hemophilia publicized their own plight and demanded a state investigation. In Italy and Denmark, insurgent hemophilia rights groups abandoned the practice of insisting on the privacy of people with hemophilia; television stations were invited to record the plight of hemophilia sufferers, as a strategy for boosting public support.

During this initial spate of activism, the principal demand in most of the thirty-three member nations of the World Federation of Hemophilia was that hemophiliacs with AIDS and their families receive financial compensation from the government and/or the drug companies. Most people with AIDS, of course, did not contract the disease from factor concentrate, but rather through sex or dirty needles shared by drug users. In distinguishing hemophilia sufferers from other people with AIDS, and claiming they were uniquely entitled to compensation, the activists were doing more than practicing interest group politics; they were also making a judgment about who was and wasn't deserving. The international federation nurtured these efforts, even as it tiptoed through the social minefield of guilt and innocence. In a memo to member national organizations, it observed that "the public has to be convinced that haemophiliacs are *particularly eligible* for compensation, especially with respect to psychic and social aspects. . . ." (Emphasis added.) A few months later, it urged that governments recognize "the *uniquely tragic position* of people with haemophilia who have become HIV-seropositive through the use of medically indicated blood products. . . ." (Emphasis added.)

As new information has continued to surface about what was known about AIDS and blood, when it was known, and by whom, the sense of outrage has heightened among activists. Pharmaceutical houses were accused of putting hemophilia sufferers' lives at risk by knowingly distributing tainted batches of Factor VIII. Over a period of months, sometimes years, those companies failed to test the blood they used to manufacture concentrate in order to determine whether it was infected with HIV, and failed to switch to heat-treated Factor VIII, a process that destroys HIV, until their stocks of the non-heat-treated product had been used up. For their part, public health officials were charged with criminal indifference to the plight of people with hemophilia.

Nowhere was the drumbeat of betrayal and evil-doing heard more loudly than in the United States. A "genocide" was occurring, the newly formed U.S. Hemophilia/HIV Peer Association declared in 1991, because of the "commercially driven practices of certain large pharmaceutical corporations." Those firms had failed to counter the earlier threat of hepatitis B. Had they done so, "they would have prevented the transmission of HIV." Moreover, "with the exception of persons who were transfused with contaminated blood, only our community has been brought down by AIDS precisely because we followed the advice of our doctors." These activists condemned the National Hemophilia Foundation in equally strong language. "It is difficult to comprehend how the NHF could have failed to sound an alarm" about hepatitis B. Once

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AIDS appeared, the bill of particulars noted, "the NHF . . . advised hemophiliacs not to be alarmed and not to change their treatment methods. . . . That remained the advice we were given . . . into 1985. . . . In effect we were told by NHF to use [Factor VIII] just as though there were no danger of AIDS." Under those circumstances, the foundation's reassurances were acts of betrayal, the manifesto continued. "We—the alienated—do not identify with the hemophilia institutions. After all the debacle of the 80s, we do not need an organization that cozies up to the corporate decision makers. . . ."

At the 1992 NHF convention, protesters wearing death masks confronted "the corporate mass murderers." The NHF had refused to seek financial compensation, believing that such a move would be dangerous because socially divisive, "an ideological throwback to Elizabethan Poor Laws, with notions of 'deserved' and undeserved populations." The new generation of activists demanded compensation—which by this time had been provided by every other postindustrial democracy—not only as financial relief but also as "a partial payment for wrongs that had been done." They insisted, as well, on an apology for the infliction of needless suffering and death. "Today we demand justice," exclaimed a mother of two hemophiliac sons, both dead from AIDS, "and shout to the world and to this committee, 'How did you let this happen to us?'"

Across the globe, hemophilia rights movements were similarly strident. In France, which has a centuries-long tradition of venerating its blood donors, the revelation that, for financial reasons, batches of Factor VIII (and whole blood) had been used despite knowledge of their likely impurity, led to an alliance of rebellious hemophiliacs, journalists, and lawyers. So enraged were these activists that at the criminal trial of a senior health official, police feared that infected syringes would be thrown at the accused. In Japan, lawsuits and street theater were the twin prongs of the hemophilia rights campaign. One attorney explained the dual strategy: "We have learned on other occasions that rights will not be bestowed from above if we are silent." On World AIDS Day 1995, 1,400 students gathered at Waseda University; two weeks later, rallies were held in eight Japanese cities, as two thousand demonstrators massed at Tokyo's Ministry of Health and Welfare. This public campaign forced the heads of pharmaceutical houses and health officials in Japan to rethink their attitude of cavalier dismissal. In 1995, Green Cross, the country's primary supplier of blood products, had patronizingly said that "[w]e feel pity for the patients rather than being sorry for them." Less than a year later, though, amid a widening blood scandal, the Green Cross president reversed his position. At a meeting with spokesmen for the hemophilia rights group, he bowed deeply in apology, his forehead touching the floor, and this display of physical and psychological vulnerability became the defining moment of the conflict. Subsequently, a high-ranking Japanese government official has been sentenced to prison for his role in the blood products scandal, and officials at companies that manufacture blood products stand accused of falsifying data.

In Canada, more than a hundred policy makers have been the focus of a multiyear investigation, conducted by an official commission of inquiry at a cost of more than $14 million (Canadian), and it is anticipated that the commission's report will result in charges of criminal misconduct. Variations on these themes have been played out in half a dozen other countries, including Ireland, Germany, and the Netherlands. Even Switzerland, home of the International Red Cross, widely believed to have set the gold standard for purity of the blood supply, has had its own blood scandal.

Innocent Victims—and Everyone Else

Across the globe, the story of AIDS and people with hemophilia is told the same way: a tiny and vulnerable group, born with a medical condition that it has struggled to overcome with the help of modern science, guilty of nothing except faith in its doctors, is decimated by the very forces that it regarded as its saviors. It's an irresistible narrative, and politicians of varying stripes have been drawn to the cause like moths to flame. In Japan, a health minister seized upon their grievance to clean house in his bureaucracy, so boosting his own political career. Hemophili-

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acs formed an alliance with the ultra-right National Front, which stood to gain politically from the hemophilia sufferers' plight. Jean-Marie Le Pen's party nominated a hemophiliac candidate for Parliament. Across France, posters featured a torch with a flame of letters that spelled out the party's favorite scapegoats—"*Socialisme, Immigration, Délinquance, Affairisme*"—equating them with SIDA, the French acronym for AIDS.

Even where innocence and its shadow weren't so sharply contrasted, gays and hemophilia sufferers often found themselves at odds. The fact that hemophilia was often confounded in the popular imagination with homosexuality exacerbated the divide. Hemophilia activists in France relied on homophobic fears as a reason for maintaining the separation between groups led by gays and those led by people with hemophilia. Because hemophilia sufferers are men, these spokesmen contended, their joining forces with gay groups could be read as confirming the belief that people with hemophilia were homosexual. ("Hemo-homo," a common schoolyard taunt in many nations, graphically expresses this popularly conceived connection.) For its part, the Italian Hemophilia Association demanded hospitalization for people with hemophilia apart from other terminally ill AIDS patients, who were mainly gay and intravenous drug users.

These quarrels reflected more profound differences in how the gay and hemophilia movements responded to the AIDS epidemic. Gay-led AIDS organizations neither sought special compensation nor placed much stress on identifying and punishing the culpable parties, as did people with hemophilia. At the outset of the epidemic, it was rumored that AIDS was a CIA plot to kill off homosexuals, but that claim was quickly dismissed as paranoid. For gays, there was little support for conspiracy theories; AIDS wasn't a metaphor, just a virus. The gay AIDS message has emphasized empowerment rather than victimhood (tellingly, people with AIDS, or people living with AIDS, not AIDS victims, is the preferred expression), as well as the need for the AIDS-infected to become involved in influencing policy that directly affects their lives. Such participation has been conceived as altering the curve of the future: promoting effective treatment, a vaccine, and eventually a cure for the disease. For that reason, gay activists have pressed for greater public support for AIDS research, and some have schooled themselves in the language of science in order to participate in forums usually dominated by scientists.

Hemophilia groups, by contrast, have mainly presented themselves as victims entitled to compensation. Perhaps because, unlike gays, they already expected to receive care, they concentrated their energies on the misdeeds of the blood products industry rather than on AIDS treatments or vaccines. Their demands have been expressed in terms of tangible entitlements—financial settlements—as well as symbolic acts of contrition. To a remarkable extent, the movement has achieved its goals. In that success are to be found the seeds of its possible demise.

W(h)ither Activism?

The future of the hemophilia rights movement is uncertain. Having achieved much of what it set out to do, the movement has only the power of solidarity, or the possibility of a new threat to the purity of the blood concentrate supply, upon which to pitch its appeal. The movement has spoken about the price of death but not the need for treatment. It conceives of justice as being therapeutic, but justice is a discipline, not a cure. Despite all the criticisms hemophiliacs have leveled against their doctors, they remain dependent on those physicians, and this reality also limits the potential for mobilization. If solidarity and fearfulness prove to be insufficient glue, this new social movement will have exhausted itself in the battle over AIDS-tainted blood.

Not just hemophilia rights organizations but social movements generally stress the grievances of a narrowly defined constituency, because that is the easiest way to provide coherence, to gain members, to construct a shared narrative. This isn't necessarily a measure of social justice, however. In a *polis* where such groups hold sway, the public interest gets defined as the aggregation of these groups' grievances. Meanwhile, equally valid claims are ignored because there's no group prepared to press them. In France, the budget for indemnifying people with hemophilia is more than twice the annual outlay for AIDS

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prevention (and many times the budget for AIDS research). In the United States, individuals exposed to HIV through blood transfusions will not benefit from pending federal legislation, which provides compensation only for people with hemophilia. Nor were these transfusees invited to appear before the national commission that reviewed the operation of the U.S. blood supply system, since that commission's mandate was expressly limited to hemophilia sufferers.

Identity politics of this kind is inherently divisive, for it thrives when a particular worldview, a tale of blame, gains popular support, even when this means rejecting rival claims for justice. When hemophilia groups described themselves as "innocent victims," they invited hostility toward other people with AIDS, especially homosexuals and intravenous drug users, who could not so readily occupy the moral high ground. Their argument from innocence made it easier for public officials to focus on these favored groups, especially people with hemophilia and children with AIDS (who have also received disproportionate government aid), while paying less attention to the vast majority of AIDS cases, which are not blood-linked.

The narrative of fault and blame, as well as the focus on the plight of appealing individuals—Kimberly Bergalis in Florida, the sweet-faced teenager allegedly infected with HIV by an irresponsible gay dentist; in Japan, a charismatic adolescent who has been the symbol of the hemophilia movement—represent the successful adoption of familiar tactics of identity politics. But if emotion-laden appeals assume pride of place in democratized policy conversations, rational public officials will become more risk-averse, unwilling to invite the political fallout that comes from taking on those who can take to the television studios. In the aftermath of the hemophilia rights movement, who will risk being known as "Blood Britta," the Danish health minister who, AIDS activists claimed, "wants dead bodies on her table"? Who will weather the insult hurled at an American doctor whose professional life had been devoted to the care of people with hemophilia, and suffer being called "the Mengele of the Hemophilia AIDS Holocaust"?

The successes of the hemophilia rights movement have meant help for a handful of people who needed it. Yet in another kind of society—one less committed to the justice of Elizabethan Poor Laws, more inclined to shared responsibility—the fact that a person is seriously ill would be reason enough to deliver such help. Moral tests would not be imposed before assistance was forthcoming. The prevailing calculus of support, which invites distinctions between the deserving and the undeserving in the delivery of assistance, signals prudent public health officials how to respond to the next health crisis, and the one after that. One current public health debate concerns whether all blood should be screened, at enormous expense, for the rare and non-fatal virus hepatitis C; another has to do with whether blood found to be contaminated with Creutzfeldt-Jakob (mad cow) disease should be recalled, and recipients of such blood informed—even though there is no evidence that this disease can be transmitted by blood—because there is no way to prove the absence of risk. In such instances, the politically safe decision is to insist on zero risk—even if this means expenditures that would not withstand cost/benefit scrutiny, and even as far larger risks that won't be captured in vivid policy dramas are ignored. □

This essay draws on materials collected as part of a thirteen-nation study of AIDS and the blood supply, supported by the Toyota Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, in which the author is a participant. A longer and substantially different version of this essay will appear in a volume published under the auspices of that project.

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David Brody

LABOR ELECTIONS: GOOD FOR WORKERS?

The representation election is the hallmark of our labor law. Workers vote by secret ballot about whether or not they want union representation; if a majority votes yes, the union is certified by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), and collective bargaining begins. It all seems very democratic, and almost beyond questioning.

Yet the law has come under heavy fire in recent years. "We have to ask," David Sickler, the AFL-CIO West Coast regional director, began a recent speech, "why the hell unions are where they are right now? Why are they, we, in a declining mode?" His answer: "Because unions are trying to make change by following the old model established by federal law." Stickler's condemnation was unequivocal. "The law that governs organizing and collective bargaining"—the law, that is, centering on the representation election—"is a failure. . . . [It] doesn't work."

Sickler's view is echoed on many fronts today: on the ground, where, with the active encouragement of the new regime at the AFL-CIO, organizing campaigns choose not to seek bargaining rights through NLRB elections; in the angry testimony by labor people before the Dunlop Commission, which was set up to look into the question of labor law reform during the early days of the Clinton administration; and even in a certain sympathy (now silent inside the AFL-CIO but still voiced by some of its academic friends) for modifying the law's strict prohibitions against company-sponsored employee participation plans on the grounds that any organizational activity might be better than none.

In this essay, I want to address the paradox that a labor law democratic on its face is also a bad law for workers; or, more precisely, the paradox of a law that gives workers basic rights of association and then, through the processes of "free choice" by which they select representatives, takes those rights away. Sickler knows this to be the case—hence his fury at the law. What only history can tell him is how that law, intended by its authors to liberate workers, has ended up oppressing them.

The place to begin is with the original law, the Wagner Act of 1935. The core statement of worker rights—Section 7—needs to be quoted in full:

> Employees shall have the right to self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in concerted activities, for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.

In its time, this capacious language was as powerful, as compelling nationally, as civil rights would be thirty years later. And like the great Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 7 was a long time coming, emerging from a century-old ideological struggle that pitted the collective rights of workers against the rights of property and individual contract. For many years the battle had gone against labor, but gradually, and then inexorably, the balance shifted. We can trace back at least to the commission appointed by President Grover Cleveland to investigate the Pullman strike of 1894 the view that the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively ought not to be denied, and follow that idea into the briefly enforced wartime policy of 1917-

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1918, the Railway Labor Act of 1926, and, by virtual acclamation during Herbert Hoover's administration, into the Norris-LaGuardia Anti-Injunction Act of 1932.

Norris-LaGuardia, in fact, already contained the language of Section 7. All that the Wagner Act added was enforcement provisions—the unfair labor practices of Section 8 prohibiting employers from coercing employees in the exercise of their rights, dominating or assisting labor organizations, discriminating against employees for union activity, or refusing to bargain collectively with the representatives of employees. There was debate over the substance of these unfair labor practices, but never any question that a law seeking to enforce labor's rights would contain such provisions. Indeed, the Senate committee reporting out the Wagner bill treated Sections 7 and 8 as a package.

A state-mandated bargaining structure—what became the rules of representation in Section 9—was something else. This had never figured in the long-evolving struggle for labor's rights, but sprang rather from an anomalous, and probably unrepeatable, historical moment when the United States had its one serious fling with a corporatist economy.

My reference is, of course, to the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, which took shape during the Hundred Days when the New Deal was scrambling to come to grips with the Great Depression. The economic reasoning behind the Recovery Act was that the severe contraction of the economy was caused by cutthroat competition, and that unrestrained market forces could be tamed by a national program of economic stabilization. This was the task of industry codes of fair competition, written and administered by the industries themselves, but overseen from Washington by the National Recovery Administration (NRA). Each code regulated in detail not only the business practices of its industry, but also wages, hours, and working conditions. And to each code was attached Section 7(a), which asserted the by then inarguable principle "that employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing." (Section 7(a) of the NRA codes should not be confused with Section 7 of the later Wagner Act.) This was the place, in a massive, chaotic corporatist experiment in industrial self-regulation, where the grand objectives of Norris-LaGuardia lodged and from whence came our permanent labor law.

Exhilarated workers—free at last, so they thought—rose up and organized. Strikes erupted across the country. Fearing for economic recovery, President Roosevelt set up the National Labor Board (NLB), with Robert F. Wagner, the great urban liberal senator from New York, as its chair (and by this assignment fated him to be the father of American labor law). Initially, the Board's mission was solely to mediate the NRA strikes. It had no responsibility, nor any agenda, for implementing Section 7(a). Nor was there even a conception of the representation structure that would be enacted in 1935. There was no model for this anywhere in the industrialized world, and no substantial precedent in America's own experience, which had been, in this realm, determinedly voluntaristic. The one precursor law, the Railway Labor Act of 1926, had simply left the designation of representatives for "the respective parties" to decide for themselves.

Wagner's board thus took the position that "the selection of a form of organization and designation of representatives, as well as the method of designation, are placed by Section 7(a) within the exclusive control of the workers." Yet it was precisely the choice of forms of organization and methods of designation—"this freedom of self-organization," as the NLB called it in one early case—that the Wagner Act ultimately did take from workers and arrogate to the state.

That happened because of the way employers responded to Section 7(a). They dared not oppose it in principle—any more than, say, Texaco today dares claim it did right by discriminating against black employees—but they did have a strategy. In a great rush, they set up company unions, through which workers appeared to be exercising their rights, but which of course the companies controlled. These NRA creations were not fake trade unions, but a different animal altogether. They were works councils, or, in the more common usage, employee representation plans, and hence systemically different from trade unions. This mean that, once Senator Wagner concluded that the company unions

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violated Section 7(a), he had to meet them on their own terrain—that is, he had to advance a representation system that was compatible with the principles of self-organization. This happened piecemeal, case by case as disputes came before Wagner's board in 1933 and 1934, but the drift was unmistakably toward state-mandated representation—ultimately, a privileged bargaining structure that granted to unions demonstrating support by a majority of workers the right of exclusive representation and requiring the employer to bargain with unions so certified, and them alone.

The irony is that, once the Wagner Act passed into law, the reason for this NLRB-administered system evaporated, because the company unionism that had called it forth simultaneously became illegal. Wagner had objected to company unions, of course, because employers dominated them. This was not just a moral judgment on his part; the concept of company domination was already legally established and proscribable under railway labor law by the time Wagner took up the fight for Section 7(a) in 1933. His problem was definitional: What actions constituted company domination? What forms of labor organization should be protected? The answers came piecemeal, forged in the same battle against company unionism that created the representation system. The outcome, in the final draft of the Wagner Act, simply swept company unionism off the board: workplace-representation in any form not stemming from collective bargaining became—and still is—effectively proscribed.* But by this time, the die was cast. The associational rights of workers—"this freedom of self-organization"—had fused with a specific state-mandated process for determining and certifying bargaining agents.

All this should suffice to show that there is nothing sacred or inevitable about our law of labor representation. It is, unlike labor's basic rights, not imperishably rooted in our history, but only the product of a passing, aberrant moment.

Later generations have been slow to recognize the dangers to freedom of association lurking in this representation system. Not so the authors of the Wagner Act. They fully grasped the problem in both of its dimensions: first, that any formal representation process would be vulnerable to the demand for a voice by employers; and second, that their participation would inherently be coercive of workers. What an employer says, noted the Twentieth Century Fund in testifying for the law, "so easily leads to what is coercion and fear." All it takes is to "go to a man whose bread and butter is dependent on your pay envelop and suggest to him you think it would be a good thing for him to form a company union." Wagner and his allies, veterans of the campaign against company unionism, appreciated all too keenly the problem of coercive speech.

That was why, in the course of the NRA battle, Wagner's labor board had fashioned a common law of employer neutrality: employers could not say prior to a representation election that workers would be better off voting one way or another; that the plant would close if the outside union won; that concessions would be forthcoming if the company union won; or, to individuals, that they would be rewarded or punished for how they voted. In the Wagner Act, the enforcement of employer neutrality was grounded in the unfair-labor-practice language. The original 1934 bill had prohibited employers from interfering with, influencing, or restraining employees in the exercise of their associational rights. The final version, however, backed away from so expansive a proscription on employer speech. In deference to First Amendment concerns, the word "influence" was stricken out.

All the more important, therefore, the doctrinal justification for employer neutrality—namely, that when workers chose bargaining agents under NLRB supervision they were really engaging in self-organization. "The election was nothing with which the employer need be concerned," concluded a Brookings Institu-

*Unless, that is, Republicans have their way and the so-called TEAM (Teamwork for Employees and Management) Act gets passed, in which case the employee representation plans will be back in business.

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tion account of Wagner's earlier 7(a) rulings. "It was a matter in which his employees alone had a stake."

Wagner as best he could shaped the law with that claim in mind. Thus, for example, his "one-sided" treatment of employers or, equally telling, how he handled what we have taken to be the capstone provision, the representation election. Despite a lot of rhetoric, Wagner actually minimized the election. It was "nothing but an investigation, a factual determination of who are the representatives of employees." An election, in fact, was not mandatory in the Wagner Act; at the discretion of the NLRB, "any other suitable method" would do.

Self-organization and employer neutrality went together. "The employer has no place in elections," insisted Francis Biddle, Wagner's successor at the NRA, because the election is "a mere inquiry into the facts." To employer complaints that the law was one-sided, Wagner responded that workers did not presume to interfere when their employers organized (as they had been doing with great abandon under the aegis of the NRA) so why should employers interfere when workers organized? They "must leave the worker alone during an election."

In the early Wagner Act years, the NLRB treated anti-union statements unequivocally as unfair labor practices. "In the final analysis," asserted its 1937 annual report, "most of this propaganda, even when it contains no direct or even indirect threat, is aimed at the worker's fear of loss of his job." Employers got the message. If you want to avoid trouble, a 1940 legal manual for employers advised, "Stay *completely neutral* regarding elections."

The underpinning in self-organization doctrine likewise was robust. The NLRB regularly certified unions by means of card checks, the inspection of membership lists, even the impression an NLRB examiner got of majority support at a factory meeting. Nearly a third of all certifications in 1938-1939 occurred without an election. And when, for example, a bill came before Congress permitting employers to petition for elections, the NLRB responded with the (by then) boilerplate argument: "The employer has no legitimate interest in the question. . . . The right of employees to choose their representatives when and as they wish is normally no more the affair of the employer than the right of stockholders to choose directors is the affair of the employees."

When did all this begin to change? The decisive blow was cast, remarkably, by Wagner's own NLRB. The law had not anticipated that organized labor would split apart over industrial unionism, or that representation campaigns would become battlegrounds between the AFL and the CIO, in which employers might sometimes be caught in a standoff between rival unions. In this situation, the NLRB ruled in *Cudahy* (1939), the employer could require an election, even if documentary evidence hitherto considered adequate showed that one of the unions had a majority. On the basis of *Cudahy*, the board promptly established a general rule that employers could require an election whenever a union claimed majority status, irrespective of whether a rival union was present. At the behest of the employer, the election became mandatory.

Why had the NLRB done this? In part, for political reasons. It was besieged at this time by charges, not wholly unfounded, that it was communist-infested and pro-CIO; *Cudahy* was a bone thrown to its tormentors. But that was the least of it. The board had gotten caught up in its own bureaucratic processes—the official explanation was that, by reducing "doubt and disagreement" about employee preferences, *Cudahy* would make for better bargaining relations after certification—and had lost sight of why the mechanisms for choosing representatives had been left open.

It was but a short step to Taft-Hartley, which in 1947 made the election mandatory for certification.* A union might still gain exclusive bargaining rights without an election and without benefit of NLRB certification, but it was left to

*An employer, in principle, cannot arbitrarily reject a union's claim to majority status. In a series of decisions, beginning with "good-faith doubt" and how to test it, the courts have whittled down the limits on employer discretion to the point that, absent egregious unfair labor practices, the employer has today an absolute right to reject union claims and force the union to petition for an election (*Linden Lumber* [1974]). Non-certification recognition encapsulates to perfection how judicial interpretation turns something into nothing in the labor law.

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the employer to assess the union's claim of majority standing. For practical purposes there is today no alternative route, only the mischievous legacy of *Cudahy* that empowers the employer (who has every interest in doing so) to make the election mandatory.

With the election now the core process, Taft-Hartley undertook a telling repositioning of the law. Unions became subject, like employers, to unfair labor practices; employers, like unions, got the right to petition for elections; they had become, in the eyes of the law, equal players in an electoral game. As for the workers, Section 7 now said they could refrain from as well as act on their rights of association. This was empty of legal meaning, but in the symbolism of the representation election it said that the worker was just a voter making a choice between collective and individual bargaining.

The Supreme Court had already, in 1941, taken cognizance of the free-speech rights of employers in *Virginia Electric & Power*. Employer speech could be proscribed, but not by any blanket rule of employer neutrality. Then Taft-Hartley inserted this free-speech provision (Section 8c) into the law:

> The expressing of any views, argument, or opinion, or the dissemination thereof, whether in written, printed, graphic, or visual form, shall not constitute or be evidence of an unfair labor practice under any provision of this Act, if such expression contains no threat of reprisal or force or promise of benefit.

It had been the premise of the authors of the Wagner Act that the only way to assure employee free choice was to bar employers from the process. Now, with Taft-Hartley, the time came for testing that premise: in effect, was there a middle ground on which employer free speech and employee free choice might co-exist?

The courts and the NLRB have sought this ground in two ways: first, by trying to define, through a variety of tests, what constitutes impermissible employer speech; and, second, by a balancing of the conflicting rights of employers to speak and of workers to associate freely.*

Immediately, however, a second employer right—the right of property—entered the equation. In its simplest form, this involved the question of solicitation: should unions have the same access that employers did to workers on company property? No, the Supreme Court ruled in *Babock & Wilcox* (1956), except where workers are so physically isolated, say, in a lumber camp or cannery, that they are beyond the reach of the union. *Lechmere* (1992) recently reaffirmed that standard.

And what about that other "property" of employers, the labor of their employees? Since the employer has bought their time, can he make them listen? The NLRB had always regarded "captive audience" meetings as coercive and barred them. In 1948, bowing to Taft-Hartley, the board declared captive audience meetings lawful, but went on in *Bonwit Teller* (1951) to assert the correlative right of unions to reply. In 1953, the Eisenhower board in *Livingston Shirt* rejected this equal-access claim, and the Supreme Court agreed, providing that organizers had other access to employees. As things currently stand, access to employees at the workplace is exclusively (save in isolated settings) the prerogative of the employer.

Interrogating workers, like captive audience speeches, was originally prohibited as inherently coercive. Then, in *Blue Flash* (1954), the NLRB said no, interrogation could not itself be proscribed, only those interrogations in which coercion could be demonstrated. A jungle of case law has grown up around *Blue Flash*, but no amount of fine distinctions about time, place, and so on can alter the fact that, in the heat of a representation campaign, an interview in the supervisor's office about how an employee feels about the company is coercive to that employee.

The same unreality pervades the case law on the Taft-Hartley limits on free speech. Threats and promises are proscribed. But what constitutes a "threat" or a "promise"? That it is more than a prediction, the Supreme Court in its wisdom decided in *Gissel* (1969). This distinction

*The summary account that follows scarcely captures the contested legal history of the modern labor law. Readers interested in the politics behind that history, and the doctrinal marches and countermarches, are urged to consult the excellent last installment of James A. Gross's NLRB trilogy, *Broken Promises: The Subversion of U.S. Labor Relations Policy, 1947-1994* (Temple University Press, 1995).

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between threat and prediction currently defines the scope of protected employer free speech. Employers cannot say that they will close the plant if the union wins, but they can say that their customers will go elsewhere or point to neighboring unionized plants that went out of business. And they can describe the bargaining tactics they intend to follow if the union wins, with negotiations starting from "scratch" and no guarantee that the employees will not end up on the streets. *Gissel* is duck soup for lawyers; no employer need fear that, with the right counsel, he cannot safely make "predictions" that scare the pants off his employees.

It is not as if the courts have been blind to the power realities on the shop floor. Indeed, *Gissel* was eloquent about the dangers of equating an NLRB election with a political election, "where the independent voter may be freer to listen more objectively and employers as a class freer to talk." Nor have we lacked for standards of what constitutes a fair representation election. In *General Shoe* (1948) the Truman NLRB held up a "laboratory standard" it intended to enforce: elections must "be conducted, under conditions as nearly ideal as possible, to determine the uninhibited desires of the employees."

For all its brave words *General Shoe*, like *Gissel*, only demonstrated the futility of the law of employer free speech. *General Shoe*'s "laboratory standard" gave rise to another luxuriant case law, fascinating for the distinctions it developed between the permissible and impermissible in misrepresentations of fact, racist appeals, third-party actions, and so on, but for purposes of preventing "an atmosphere calculated to render a free choice improbable," of no real account. The remedy for infractions that disqualify an election on the basis of the laboratory standard is only another election. And below the screen of that standard the determined employer interrogates workers, requires them to attend captive-audience meetings, and in the multitudinous ways available to the firm, pressures them relentlessly and, if they remain uncowed, makes their lives miserable and their futures bleak.

I have spoken so far only of what is currently lawful, not of the unfair labor practices that, in this hostile atmosphere, accompany the anti-union campaign. Workers are fired every day for union activities, and nonunion workers know it. In a 1991 poll, 79 percent thought it "very" or "somewhat" likely that workers would be fired for trying to organize a union; half of this number believed that, if they participated, they themselves would be fired.

This rampant lawlessness is not different, in its sources, from the lawful assault on "free choice" that began after Taft-Hartley. Once representation was reconceived to be an electoral contest, either outcome became legitimate: if the union won, it got bargaining rights; if the company won, it got a "union-free environment." What would once have been inadmissible—employers spoke piously of the "open shop" in the old days—now became, on the fair-and-square basis of the election, respectable, in fact brazenly espoused by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and its Council for a Union-Free Environment. And so did the means it took to win. The gloves came off in the late 1950s. Within a decade, the number of NLRB unfair labor practices tripled, and by 1980 stood at a record fifty thousand. By Paul Weiler's count, one worker was being illegally discharged for every twenty union votes cast.

The prohibition against discrimination for union activity is the most basic and unimpeachable in the law. Yet employers routinely violate it and accept the back-pay penalty as a cost of doing business. By the time workers are reinstated, the union has long since been crushed, and few workers who are reinstated actually stay around for long. What had begun as fundamental to labor's rights has ended as an incident of the representation election, an item in play in the hardball that determines whether or not employers preserve their union-free environment. This lawlessness does not merely vitiate free choice; it attacks the integrity of labor's fundamental rights and drains the law of the moral content that had brought it into being in the first place.

Unions today consider it a big victory when they can extract from employers a promise to be "neutral" in a representation campaign. No one seems to remember that employer neutrality was once what the law itself required. This had been

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Senator Wagner's doing. But also, sadly, was its undoing, because the law that Wagner wrote had built into it the conditions that eventually killed employer neutrality. Once free choice came to be synonymous with electoral choice, it followed that employers would be seen as parties to the process, that their "free speech" rights would then prevail, and that we would end up more or less as we have with employer domination of the representation election.

David Sickler knows the representation election is bad for workers. He should also know it has no moral claim on them. The idea that it is somehow inherent or inevitable in a law protecting the associational rights of workers is wrong. History says otherwise. State-administered representation had no original place in the law's Section 7 rights; it emerged without design from the miasma of this country's one fling with corporatism; its core process, the mandatory election, came as a still later accretion on the law; and it has evolved, in ways I have described, into a formidable constraint on the exercise of rights that the law still says that American workers have.

Knowing this history, we can think more productively about how to write a better law or, until then, how to make the best of the present one. And we could mind the admonition of the chief drafter of the Wagner Act, Leon Keyserling, about not forgetting "where Labor's strength really lies" and believing that unions might be built up "with[out] anything to hold them together but some rule of law based upon distorted political analogies." This was in a private letter. Too bad he didn't say it in public. □

dissent

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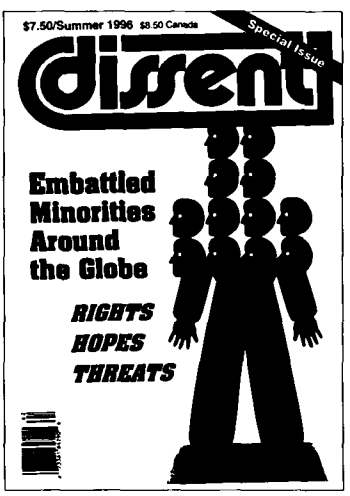

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Gordon Lafer

YALE ON TRIAL

Scholarly Life in the Age of Downsizing

"It should not be the function of Yale to reflect American life, but to lead it."

—Dean William Clyde Devane, cited by Yale President Richard Levin, November 1996

This spring, the senior administrators and faculty of Yale University are being called to the witness stand to answer federal charges that they illegally threatened graduate students engaged in a strike for union recognition. The trial, in a courtroom of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), caps what has been a period of unprecedented division in the Yale Graduate School. The trial's outcome will have a direct impact on the eight-year-old unionization drive among Yale graduate teachers, and may well set a legal precedent for similar drives at campuses across the country. Beyond this, it poses a critical test for the protection of academic freedom in the downsized academy, particularly for the graduate students, part-timers, and adjunct professors who have come to make up a majority of most schools' teaching staffs. In this sense, the trial may well prove a turning point in the ongoing evolution of the academic profession, already under intense pressure to redefine itself as a leaner and meaner enterprise. When the gavel comes down this spring, it will announce a contest not merely between employer and employees, but also between two competing visions of the academy's future.

Unionization and the 1996 Strike

The events that stand at the center of this trial took place in response to a grade strike called by the members of the Graduate Employees and Students Organization (GESO) in January 1996. Although the strike catapulted GESO into the national spotlight, it actually marked the culmination of efforts that had been building quietly for nearly a decade. The history of this effort reads like the answer to the list of questions posed by most graduate students before joining the union: why isn't it enough simply to talk to faculty? meet with administrators? join committees? undertake studies? write letters? sign petitions? Yale graduate students have pursued all these avenues and more over the past decade, producing five blue-ribbon panels to study the problem and three separate student councils (none of which were empowered to negotiate agreements)—but leaving many of the most pressing problems unsolved. Indeed, given the high rate of turnover in the graduate school population, it is noteworthy that a consistent majority of students have chosen to join GESO in every year since its inception.* This support was put to the test in a nonbinding union election in April 1995, sponsored by the New Haven League of Women Voters. Yale administrators do not contest the fairness of this election; yet despite a vote of nearly four to one in favor of unionization, Yale refused to recognize the outcome. For eight months following this election, GESO tried to initiate a fruitful dialogue with administrators; finally, in December of 1995, graduate teachers voted to withhold fall semester grades for the classes they taught until the administration agreed to enter good-faith negotiations with the teachers' elected representatives.

The GESO drive is part of a larger national

*GESO first issued membership cards in the fall of 1991, when well over a majority of the graduate school signed up. For both legal and organizational reasons, since 1992-1993 the union has been confined to the social science and humanities departments at Yale; from this year forward, all numbers or percentages here refer to those departments.

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effort to address what are by now familiar themes in higher education. For the past twenty years, universities across the country have been downsizing, meaning that they have found ways to get by with fewer and fewer full-time faculty, relying instead on a burgeoning army of contingent teachers. At Yale, teaching hours are split in roughly equal thirds between faculty, graduate students, and adjuncts, with graduate students doing slightly more teaching than faculty. Yet for the central role they play in the school's educational mission, graduate teachers are poorly compensated. In 1995-1996, the standard appointment paid just over $10,000 for the full year, or $2,000 less than Yale's own estimate of the cost of living in New Haven. Considering the average $95,000 salary paid to Yale senior professors, it is not surprising that the school makes such extensive use of the Teaching Assistant (TA) program; last year, it saved over $6 million by using teaching assistants rather than regular faculty.* For Ph.D. candidates, this equation is a double-edged sword: while in school they are the cheap labor force for undergraduate instruction, and upon receiving their degrees, they discover that there are very few jobs because every place else is doing the same thing as Yale.

When the strike officially began on January 2, more than two hundred TAs (roughly 60 percent of the total) joined in withholding their grades. By the time it ended, that number had been cut nearly in half. This falloff, and the ultimate decision to end the strike without having won a contract, reflect a number of factors. The decision to strike in the first place—to hold up students' transcripts, disregard faculty demands, and defy the central administration—was a difficult one for all involved; for some, the fears or uncertainties wrapped up in these issues intensified as the confrontation grew more prolonged.[1] Strike participants faced additional hostility on campus; although a thousand undergraduate students signed petitions calling for GESO's recognition, much of the undergraduate population was vociferously anti-union; a masthead editorial in the campus daily urged administrators to "finally eliminate" the union.[2] Far more important than either of these, however, were the open threats to the academic careers of strike participants.

Shortly after the strike vote, the union leadership began receiving reports of threats so extreme that they at first seemed unbelievable. One TA's adviser, for instance, told her that if she participated in the strike he would refuse to read her dissertation, would see that she never again taught at Yale, and would back administration efforts to have her expelled. At first, these were taken to be the actions of rogue faculty gone overboard. We appealed to the administration to issue a clear policy separating union activity from academic relations. Instead, however, Deans Thomas Appelquist and Richard Brodhead issued a memo stating their intent to ban strikers from spring semester jobs and implicitly encouraging the use of strike participation as a criterion for writing negative letters of recommendation for those entering the academic job market. "The failure to perform the tasks of evaluating student work . . . is a serious breach of academic responsibility," wrote the deans. "At the least, such a breach should be expected to bear on the evaluation of the graduate student instructor's performance as a teacher."[3] Expulsion, added university spokesman Gary Fryer, was not out of the question.[4] By late December, the administration had signaled its willingness to carry out this threat, ordering three elected leaders of the union to appear in a disciplinary hearing that might result in their expulsion from the university.

Downsizing and Academic Governance

Though Yale's strong-arm tactics have much in common with those used by employers in other industries, the nature of academic work makes union-bashing at a university unique. And in this sense, the Yale case sheds important light on the choices that scholars face as they confront a changing profession. Beyond its effect on the finances of university administrations and

* In 1994-1995, Yale senior professors averaged $96,500 per year, according to a survey of the American Association of University Professors, reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 21, 1995. Savings in the TA system are based on data presented in *True Blue: An Investigation into Teaching at Yale*, Graduate Employees and Students Organization, Fall 1995.

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academic job seekers, the national trend toward downsizing is also working major changes in the very definition of scholarly communities. The traditional image of academic life pictures the campus as a refuge from the rat race—a place that truly deserves the term "community," where scholars can engage even controversial issues without the pressure of market forces. Yale's free speech policy celebrates this image as constituting the heart of its academic mission: "Nothing is more conducive to . . . basic human liberties than a community . . . where all shades of opinion can be voiced and all avenues of thought pursued . . . To fulfill this function, a free interchange of ideas is necessary . . . the right to discuss the unmentionable, and challenge the unchallengeable."[5] At its core, this vision rests on creating a space where scholars are freed to think boldly—to follow their convictions and their analysis secure in the knowledge that, as long as their work is rigorous, they needn't worry about offending higher-ups.

Instead, the type of community being shaped by the corporatized university is one that promotes fear and insecurity among its central operating principles. The adjuncts, part-timers, and graduate students who now constitute the preponderance of teaching staff are not only paid less than their tenure-track colleagues; they also occupy positions of institutionalized insecurity. Forever hopeful of getting the break that will afford them entree to a permanent position, perpetually seeking to appear attractive in the eyes of those who might put in a good word for them, the new professoriat is defined not by its boldness of thought but by its desperation to please. Indeed, this desperation is a necessary ingredient in the "flexible production" model of education. The value of the contingent professoriat lies substantially in administrators' ability to use teachers as a "just in time" factor of production: keeping them on hold until enrollments require their presence; shifting them from one class to another without regard for the boundaries of specialization; and assigning them catch-all job descriptions that expand as needed to include the responsibility of thesis advising or the drudgery of photocopying. In other industries, workers accept such conditions out of economic necessity. However, university teachers—even long-term adjuncts—can usually make more money doing something else. They put up with their conditions not for the paycheck, but because life in academia is such a highly valued and increasingly rare commodity.

So teachers stick around in the hope of impressing someone—*anyone*—who can help them up the academic ladder. If hiring and promotion decisions were made by strictly meritocratic criteria—say, the number of articles published in respected journals or the average grade on students' teacher-evaluation reports—the value of this contingent labor force might be substantially diminished. Under such conditions, teachers could object to their terms of employment, or even refuse assignments, without fear of offending a potentially important referee. For the TA/adjunct system to work, then, administrators must ensure that teachers remain subject to a regime of informal, personal, and discretionary authority. But in so doing, they create a generation of scholars whose most enduring characteristic stands in direct contradiction to the ideal of a scholarly community.

With some modifications, this same system governs the lives of faculty at Yale. In a school with no tenure track, junior faculty are largely powerless to challenge objectionable aspects of their work lives. Yet even tenured faculty at Yale are surprisingly vulnerable to administrative pressure. Not only is there no faculty union at Yale, there is not even a faculty senate. When faculty members sit on university committees, they are not elected by their peers, they are handpicked by top administrators. Moreover, the internal economy of the school—salaries, offices, computers, the number of graduate students and research assistants one receives funding for, summer research money, travel grants, even budgets for photocopying and long-distance phone calls—is based on individual deal-making and informal relations. None of these is determined by meritocratic criteria—or indeed by any written code at all. All of them are based on cultivating the personal good favor of central administrators and department chairs. Yale is unusual in the extent to which its faculty lack independent means of institutional power. As

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universities go about remaking themselves, however, this more business-like structure may become more commonplace. So the shortcomings of this system that became evident during the strike may serve as a warning for schools already headed down the same path.

Faculty as Agents of Management

In its long history of labor conflict, Yale has taken things one step further than most schools, by using the vulnerabilities of faculty in order to press them into service as agents of a union-busting management. During the 1984 recognition strike of Yale clerical workers, for instance, some faculty were told that they should "expect a loss of pay and may be subject to other penalties" if they observed a union-sponsored moratorium.[6] Similarly, in a 1992 strike, faculty were told that Yale would not extend its insurance coverage to professors who moved their classes off campus to respect picket lines, and that they would be personally liable for any student injured en route to relocated classes. In these ways, Yale administrators have sought to enroll faculty in the bureaucracy of labor repression.

The grade strike saw the most extreme use of faculty as strike breakers and management enforcers in the long history of Yale labor disputes. Faculty were repeatedly warned that they were responsible for doing the work of striking TAs, though this is not, of course, part of their job description.[7] And most fundamentally, faculty were asked to identify strikers in their departments, to carry out mass firings of these teachers, and to uphold the legitimacy of using strike participation as a criterion in letters of recommendation.

One of the notable aspects of the administration's efforts to break the strike was that well-respected liberals among the faculty engaged in what may be illegal acts of coercion and intimidation. Given the faculty's own dependence on administrative prerogative, it is easy to imagine that even those who might have preferred to stay out of the fray found themselves under intense pressure to conform with the university's agenda. There were a significant number who bravely resisted this pressure, including those such as constitutional scholar Rogers Smith, who was not a supporter of TA unionization *per se*, but nevertheless rejected the "bullying, threats and intimidation" tactics of Yale administrators.[8] Those who refused to go along with the reprisal campaign set an inspiring example in an otherwise depressing drama. But for the most part, Yale faculty dutifully carried out—whether reluctantly or with zeal—a series of ugly and possibly illegal actions designed to break the strike.

For many of us who witnessed the strike firsthand, the prospect of self-proclaimed progressives, feminists, and "post-colonialists" acting as strike breakers occasioned a broader crisis of confidence in the academy as a whole. Margaret Homans, a progressive feminist scholar, distributed a letter to the Modern Language Association arguing that "I would see it as a violation of my own academic freedom to be prevented from alluding to the judgment and ethics" of striking graduate students in letters of recommendation for future jobs.[9] Similarly, one of the most explicit threats of blacklisting came in a memo from the French department, whose signatories included Denis Hollier, a theorist of the avant-garde and active participant in the French student revolt of 1968, and Christopher Miller, a scholar renowned for the sensitivity with which he addresses the power relations between postcolonial authors and their Western readers. After reminding students that "teaching assignments are made individually, at the Department's discretion," their memo warned that failure to turn in grades "could legitimately be taken into account in faculty evaluations of a student's aptitude for an eventual academic career, and would jeopardize a student's opportunity to continue teaching in the Department."[10] In addition, theorists such as Peter Brooks and Ian Shapiro, whose works champion liberal humanism and democratic resistance to authority, are among those charged by the NLRB with having threatened strike participants with the loss of future jobs.*

*Ed. Note: Both Peter Brooks and Ian Shapiro, in communication with the editors, strongly deny these allegations.

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My point here is not simply that academics, like anyone else, can be hypocrites; in any case, this would hardly be earth-shaking news. Of far greater concern is that, by pressing faculty into the role of management enforcers, Yale has created a structure that systematically encourages—almost forces—this outcome. When a university tells professors that they are free to teach what they like inside the classroom, as long as their external behavior conforms to a narrowly anti-union agenda, it fundamentally undermines the integrity of intellectual life. This contradiction between word and deed is heightened by the fact that so many academics' work now touches on the very issues of power and paternalism, resistance and voice, that were at stake in the strike. For the past twenty years, almost every discipline in the humanities and social sciences has devoted a major part of its energy to plumbing the intricacies of power relations. The project of uncovering subtle forms of everyday power, understanding how debilitating hierarchies may be normalized in the structures of institutions and cultural practices, and championing the efforts of individuals to overcome these constraints has been a central component of nearly every field of study. For scholars whose work addresses these topics, the grade strike marked a crisis of legitimacy. Those who carried out the administration's program of naked threat and ideological justification have, in a sense, thrown into question their own credibility as social critics. In this sense, the corporate project of converting faculty into managers holds yet another danger: the prospect of hollowing out their intellectual work.

Last November, the general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board decided that Yale's campaign of reprisals—the threats to fire strikers, the disciplinary proceedings, the withheld letters of recommendation—constitute violations of federal labor law. To answer these charges, Yale has retained the New York firm of Proskauer, Rose, Goetz and Mendelson, one of the nation's premier anti-union law firms. With Proskauer's assistance, Yale's central defense will be the assertion that its actions should be considered legal because graduate teachers are really students rather than employees, and therefore are not protected by federal labor law. Thus, the administration's central strategy rests on the hope that a legal technicality will allow Yale to engage in actions that in any other setting would be clearly illegal.

It is troubling that, in the absence of any legal requirement, Yale recognizes no *principled* reason to maintain a dividing line between political activity and academic evaluation; and this concern applies to faculty as well as graduate students. There is no legal barrier, for instance, preventing administrators from using union activity as a criterion for denying tenure. The only thing standing in the way of such policies is the widespread conviction that they violate core principles of the academy. In its treatment of striking graduate teachers, however, Yale has already signaled its dissent from this consensus. Although no administrators have yet suggested a similar approach to faculty, the pressures of downsizing have already brought changes that were unimaginable only a decade ago, including the efforts of several schools to eliminate tenure altogether. In this context, it is impossible to dismiss the concern that graduate student blacklisting may spill over into faculty governance as well. If Yale wins its case, then, it will not only imperil Yale TAs. It will also mark a major step toward eroding the moral consensus that stands behind academic freedom for all of us.

What Is To Be Done?

One year after the strike, GESO remains a strong and active organization, continuing to advocate immediate improvements in conditions at Yale and recognition of the broader rights of collective self-representation. As we look to the future, however, there are several obvious questions that need to be answered—most important, how we can win a contract next time, and how the faculty can avoid the role of management enforcer in future campaigns. The primary thing we need to do in the future is simply to do *more*. Even if graduate teachers win a government-sponsored election, Yale's past behavior suggests that the administration may not engage in good-faith negotiations unless confronted

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with the collective mobilization of graduate students. If there is a hope of winning a contract without having to strike—and certainly if another strike becomes necessary—the key to the future lies in building a bigger and stronger organization: reaching out to more students, doing more careful organizing, and slowly working toward a consensus for action among graduate students across the university. Building a participatory, grassroots organization isn't rocket science. It's a slow process, requiring thousands of patient conversations, but there is no question that this is the central ingredient in any successful union drive.

Although this may seem like an impossible task, the truth is that Yale's history is encouraging. Over the past decade, graduate student unionization has followed a cyclical pattern of organizing, confrontation, and demobilization; but after each round of this cycle the organization has emerged stronger. As long as the Yale administration holds to its practiced path, graduate student activism will continue to be fueled both by the concrete problems of the graduate teaching system and by the arrogance and condescension with which Yale treats its Ph.D. candidates.

It is graduate student activism rather than faculty intervention that provides the key to winning union recognition. Nevertheless, the behavior of faculty members has a dramatic impact on the extent to which graduate teachers feel free to pursue their own demands. For this reason, the issue of what standards faculty will adopt in future union campaigns remains one of the critical open questions.

Some of the faculty who participated in the administration's reprisals have attributed their stance to a distaste with the union's rhetoric or tactics. But this notion rings false as an explanation for actual behavior. It presents a view of politics as marketing, where positions are judged not by the deep principles embodied in each party's agenda, but by the superficial appeal of their presentation. In fact, Yale faculty are not so easily swayed, and it is disingenuous to claim that, if only graduate students had pitched their case in more pleasing terms, those carrying out mass firings would instead have been defending union rights. Indeed, there is not a single known faculty supporter of the union whose allegiance shifted as a result of the strike.

More to the point, the question of whether union rhetoric is appealing or alienating fundamentally mistakes the issue at hand. Faculty are not being asked to serve as union boosters, but simply to defend the right of others to support the union without fear of academic retribution. For faculty committed to uphold this more basic principle, the quality of union communications is essentially irrelevant.

In fact, it is the Labor Board trial itself that is most likely to change faculty behavior in any future union campaign. Like other employers, Yale's anti-union strategy relied heavily on the active participation of those closest to the strikers, whose personal relationships lent the greatest weight to the threats conveyed.[11] Obviously, it is much more intimidating for graduate students to receive threats from their own faculty than from central administrators—even if the faculty are conveying policies they had no hand in developing—because the potential costs of disregarding faculty advice extend far beyond the employment relationship. So long as faculty continue to play this role, students will organize at their own peril. If, however, faculty insist on their independence in conflicts between graduate teachers and administrators, they will accomplish two fundamental changes: they will put a stop to the single most dangerous category of threats; and they will place severe limitations on the administration's strategy of using the faculty-student relationship as a primary site of anti-union reprisals. Given the Yale faculty's own powerlessness within the university, it is naive to imagine that a majority of faculty members will become union supporters. However, if the NLRB proceedings produce a faculty that is effectively neutral in union campaigns—that is, neutral in its actions, regardless of the professors' personal convictions—this will mark a dramatic step forward in the democratization of campus relations.

The strike at Yale drew national attention primarily because it came at a time of crisis in the academy as a whole. As universities increasingly hire graduate students and adjunct instructors, the question of these teachers' status is one

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of the central issues that will define the academy for decades to come. The outcome of this trial will play an important role in determining that future, both in setting legal precedent for graduate teachers and in shaping employment policy in one of the nation's leading schools. If universities are staffed with teachers who lack both the security of decently paying jobs and the freedom to challenge their work conditions without fear of reprisal, we will create campuses that are defined by personal bitterness, political cowardice, and intellectual cynicism. On the other hand, if teachers can establish the right to organize at Yale, it will mark at least a small step toward lifting the floor of the academic labor market and guaranteeing that free intellectual inquiry does not become one more casualty of downsizing. Those who remain active in the Yale union can only hope that faculty will come to see that they too have a stake in forging this path. □

Notes

[1] For an excellent, detailed examination of graduate students' own thinking on unionization and strike participation, see Corey Robin and Michelle Stephens, "Against the Grain: Organizing TAs at Yale," *Social Text* 49 (Winter 1996):43-74.

[2] "Yale Should Punish GESO," *Yale Daily News*, December 20, 1995, p. 6.

[3] Memo to Graduate Students with Teaching Responsibilities in Yale College, December 12, 1995.

[4] Reported in Beverly Gage, "Have You No Shame?" *New Haven Advocate*, December 21, 1995.

[5] Yale University, Policy on Freedom of Expression.

[6] Memo from Philosophy Department Chair, cited in Craig Charney, et al., *Organizing Yale: A Historical Sketch of Unions and Labor-Management Relations at the University* (New Haven, 1985).

[7] Deans Brodhead and Appelquist issued a memo to faculty on December 12, 1995, stating that "in the event of a disruption . . . we must ask those of you with lecture courses to assume the burden of providing term grades for your undergraduate students." They also asked faculty to inform on strike participants: "If grades for work already evaluated this semester are being withheld or otherwise mishandled, please report this matter to your chair and to our offices." The English Department took this one step further, mandating that "ladder faculty . . . will form committees to determine grades" for students in courses where graduate students were the sole instructors. Memo from Director of Undergraduate Studies Langdon Hammer, December 17, 1995.

[8] Quoted in *Gage*.

[9] Homans's letter of January 14, 1996 was distributed to the MLA membership as part of a package of background information related to the MLA's motion censuring Yale administrators for academic reprisals.

[10] Memo to graduate students in the Department of French, from departmental faculty, December 15, 1995.

[11] For an instructive explanation of the central role played by personal supervisors in anti-union strategies, see Martin Jay Levitt, *Confessions of a Union Buster* (New York: Crown, 1993), p. 2.

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Alec Walen

THE DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE ACT AND AUTHORITARIAN MORALITY

It was a foregone conclusion that the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) would become law. A majority in this country believe that gay marriage is wrong and demeaning to the institution of marriage, and our politicians do a reasonably good job of representing the interests of their constituents, at least on nontechnical matters like this. Rare indeed was the member of Congress who expressed concern over the fact that the DOMA's sole aim is to perpetuate the unequal treatment of homosexuals by defining marriage for the purposes of federal law as "a legal union between one man and one woman."

There are both constitutional and moral problems with this inequality. Because of the constitutional problems, we may yet be saved from the law by the Supreme Court. But that is not my concern here. I want to argue that denying homosexuals the right to marry whom they love is morally unjustifiable.

As Representative Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) said, the debate over the bill "is really about a simple question, a question of equal rights. Marriage is a basic right. . . . Love and commitment are essential pillars of marriage. They are qualities that do not discriminate on account of gender. . . . Love and commitment can exist between a man and a woman and it can and does exist between men and between women." Unless it can be shown that love and commitment are not the only pillars of marriage, and that the other pillars cannot exist between men or between women, or unless there is some social need pressing enough to deny homosexuals a basic right, the DOMA stands as an unjust obstacle to equality.

Justifying the DOMA arguments is a moral burden that none of its supporters ought to slough off lightly. What follows is an examination of the best arguments made by congressional supporters of the DOMA. Focusing on the congressional debate may seem to mistake political grandstanding for serious argument. But even if most congressional supporters of the DOMA do not really believe what they say, politicians are professional weather vanes—their words are a telling indicator of what people want to hear, and thus of what the people who elect them (theoretically, the majority of us) think.

Arguments

After examining the arguments given by congressional supporters of the DOMA and showing that none of them carries the necessary moral burden, I will try to answer the following question: if there is no way the DOMA can be morally justified, why all the righteous talk in favor of it? One answer is that our culture is permeated by a current of authoritarian moral thinking. By this I mean that many Americans think that if the state does not enforce their values, disaster will follow. They see no virtue in a state that is neutral in the face of competing moral conceptions—and this shows why paying attention to the passage of the DOMA is important. For the new law symbolizes the extent to which we as a culture have yet to come to terms with the ideals of liberty and equality that we espouse.

In the following, all quotations are taken from the *Congressional Record* for the debates over the DOMA; House Debate, July 11-12, 1996; Senate Debate, September 10, 1996.

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(1) *Majority Rule*

Representative Charles Canady (R-FL): "Those of us who support this bill reject the view that [choice of a partner of the opposite sex or the same sex is] a matter of indifference. In doing so, we have the overwhelming support of the American people." Moreover, "Seventy percent of the American people are not bigots. Seventy percent of the American people are not prejudiced. Seventy percent of the American people are not mean-spirited, cruel, and hateful."

Response: Painting the opposition as insulting the people who elect you is good politics, but bad history. For most of our two hundred year history, the clear majority of people in this country thought it was immoral for whites and blacks to marry. Yet this sentiment was an expression of bigotry. What makes the majority in America today suddenly immune from bigotry? Is it the fact that we now tolerate interracial marriage? Good start, but that doesn't show that we're all better now. Given their aim of perpetuating unequal treatment of homosexual couples, one can assert that the DOMA's supporters are not bigots (or unduly tolerant of and deferential to bigots) only if they give the new law a substantive moral justification. Appeals to majority consensus do nothing to establish the justice of that consensus.

(2) *The Essence or Definition of Marriage*

Senator Daniel Coats (R-IN): "The definition of marriage is not created by politicians and judges, and it cannot be changed by them. . . . It is the union of one man and one woman. This fact can be respected, or it can be resented, but it cannot be altered."

Response: Coats's concept of marriage is implausibly narrow. No one can reasonably deny that polygamous marriages are marriages. Moreover, since many people think that same-sex couples can marry, nothing is gained by insisting that the definition of marriage does not allow for that. Concepts do what people want them to do, and insisting that one has insight into the pure essence of a concept is only a way of obscuring the background presumptions and purposes one brings to a debate. Since there is no obvious absurdity in same-sex marriage, the argument against it must appeal to more substantive reasons.

(3) *Universal Exclusion of Anything But Traditional Marriage*

Senator Phil Gramm (R-TX): "[T]he traditional family has stood for 5,000 years. . . . In every major religion in history, from the early Greek myths of the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey' to the oldest writings of the Bible to the oldest teachings of civilization, governments have recognized the traditional family as the foundation of prosperity and happiness. . . . Human beings have always given traditional marriage a special sanction. . . . Are we so wise today that we are ready to reject 5,000 years of recorded history? I do not think so."

Response: If this argument for humility were at all grounded in history, it would be worth taking seriously. But it is simply not true that societies throughout history have always given "special sanction" to marriage defined as a legal union between one man and one woman.

(a) Polygamy has very strong biblical historical credentials. Jacob, son of Isaac, married two wives, Leah and Rachel, and had children though them and their handmaids. Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (granted this was considered a sin, but because the wives were foreign, not because they were so many). Muslims from the time of Mohammed to the present allow men to marry more than one wife. And in Tibet, some women marry two or more men.

(b) Quoting from William Eskridge, Jr.'s *The Case for Same-Sex Marriage*: "Same-sex unions were an integral part of the cultures of classical Greece and republican Rome, and imperial Rome recognized same-sex marriages. During the Middle Ages the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches celebrated same-sex unions, as did imperial China. . . . Marriages in the so-called *berdache* tradition of gender-crossing effeminate men and 'amazon' women have been documented for dozens of other cultures in Africa, Australia, and Asia."

(4) *Jewish and Christian Traditions*

Representative Asa Hutchinson (R-AR): "[M]arriage is a covenant established by God

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wherein one man and one woman are united for the purpose of founding and maintaining the family."

RESPONSE: There are at least three problems with this argument.

(a) One of the foundational commitments of this country is the separation of church and state. If a particular religion refuses to sanction same-sex marriages, the government should not force it to do so. Nor, however, should the government follow suit. It can only justify denying civil sanction to these marriages if there is a legitimate secular reason for doing so.

(b) As already noted, the Bible does not represent marriage as necessarily monogamous. Moreover, the Bible says not only "You must not lie with a male as with a woman" (Leviticus 18:22), but "You must not approach a woman while she is unclean from menstruation, to have intercourse with her" (Leviticus 18:19). Indeed, the Bible says, "If a man lies with a woman while she is menstruating, and has intercourse with her, . . . they must both be cut off from their people" (Leviticus 20:18). Where, then, are the calls for conditioning marriage on abstinence during menstruation?

(c) Most religions in the West today accept the practice of picking and choosing which of the Bible's injunctions to follow, and many take as their guiding principle the ideal of love. Accordingly, again quoting Eskridge, "the Unitarian Universalist Association now affirms the growing practice of some of its ministers of conducting services of union of gay and lesbian couples and urges member societies to support their ministers in this practice. The Society of Friends leaves all issues to congregational decision, and thousands of same-sex marriages have been sanctified in Quaker ceremonies since the 1970s. . . . The General Assembly of the Union of American Hebrew Congregation (Reform Jewish synagogues) adopted a resolution in 1993 advocating legal recognition of same-sex unions." And same-sex marriages "have been sanctified by representatives of virtually all of America's leading religions."

(5) *Parenting of Children*

SENATOR ROBERT BYRD (D-WV): "If same-sex marriage is accepted . . . America will have said that children do not need a mother and a father, two mothers or two fathers will be just as good. This would be a catastrophe."

RESPONSE: There are at least three problems with this argument. First, child rearing is not the only function of marriage. If it were, then we could deny heterosexual couples, one or both of whom is infertile, the right to marry.

Second, marriage for different-sex couples does not involve any testing of parenting skill. Surely a child abuser is more likely to do a bad job of parenting than a typical homosexual, yet heterosexual child abusers have a constitutional right to get married. If they have that right, then it makes no sense to deny it to same-sex couples.

Third, where is the evidence? According to Eskridge, "Studies have repeatedly shown that children raised in gay and (especially) lesbian households are as well socialized, as psychologically adjusted, and as capable of forming healthy peer relationships as children raised in different-sex or single-parent households." And in the recent case in Hawaii of *Baehr* v. *Miike*, the judge, after hearing a number of experts for both sides, similarly held, "Gay and lesbian parents and same-sex couples can provide children with a nurturing relationship and a nurturing environment which is conducive to the development of happy, healthy and well-adjusted children."

(6) *Homosexuals' Inability to Commit*

REPRESENTATIVE TOM COBURN (R-OK): "[T]here are studies to say that over 43 percent of all people who profess homosexuality have greater than 500 partners."

RESPONSE: Granting the premise that marriage involves a serious commitment, this argument carries no weight. First, many heterosexuals can't make serious commitments, yet they are not tested for their capacity to commit. Second, some homosexuals can commit; lesbian couples are in fact not known for their promiscuity. Third, presumably only those same-sex couples that really want to commit would seek to be married. Fourth, such statistical probabilities clearly could not be used to prohibit marriages between a man and a woman. Suppose, for example, it turned out that a significant percentage of professional athletes and movie stars have more than 500 partners. We still wouldn't

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dream of prohibiting athletes and movie stars from marrying. Finally, since marriage is the institution by which society recognizes and agrees to support a commitment, the problem gay couples may now have in committing should be an argument for, not against, gay marriage.

(7) *Slippery Slope: Drawing the Line on Child Marriage, Polygamy, and Incest*

REPRESENTATIVE STEVE LARGENT (R-OK): "What logical reason is there to keep us from stopping expansion of that definition to include three people or an adult and a child, or any other odd combination that we want to have?"

RESPONSE: If there is nothing really wrong with child marriage, polygamy, and incest, then we ought to allow them. If, however, there is something wrong with them, and the restrictions are not out of proportion with the problem, then there is no slippery slope.

I believe that there are sound reasons that almost everyone would recognize for thinking that child marriage, polygamy, and incest are problematic. But just as important, restrictions on these kinds of marriages are all fairly limited in scope. None is the kind of fundamental bar that is likely to prevent certain classes of people from ever having the opportunity to marry.

On child marriage: first, this restriction is of a piece with others, such as the restrictions against driving, drinking, voting, and so on, all of which are based on the fact that the judgment of children is not fully developed. Second, the restriction is only temporary.

On polygamy: first, this restriction can be justified by the strong state interest in promoting the equality of women in our culture. Quoting Eskridge, "In a society such as ours, where men not only hold more economic and political power than women but are also less numerous, the typical pattern would be that a man would take more than one wife but a woman would take only one husband." Second, there is the problem of line drawing. We don't want to make the benefits of marriage available for any group of people that want to say they are married. Given the problem of exacerbating the inequality of women, it is reasonable to insist that one spouse suffices for companionship and support. The difference between one spouse and none is, after all, much greater than that between one spouse and more than one.

On incest: the family is an extremely potent power structure and it would allow too much room for improper coercive pressure if immediate family members could marry. And again, we should not worry too much about the prohibition on incest because the restriction rules out only a few specific people as potential spouses.

The relevance of these arguments for assessment of the DOMA is clear: the restriction on same-sex marriage is much more sweeping than any of these three, and unlike them is likely to mean that a whole class of people will never be able to find a suitable spouse.

(8) *The Destruction of Family and Society*

REPRESENTATIVE HUTCHINSON: "[O]ur country can survive many things, but one thing it cannot survive is the destruction of the family unit which forms the foundation of society."

RESPONSE: How does disallowing same-sex marriage keep families stable? It does nothing to help married couples deal with the problems of violence or drug abuse; it provides no resources for education or counseling. It makes it more likely that same-sex couples will break up. It makes it more likely that homosexuals who want to partake of marriage will marry a different-sex person, thereby creating marriages that are highly susceptible to divorce or infidelity. What then is the argument?

Perhaps the underlying idea is that if marriage is not narrowly defined, then it will not be taken seriously, and the family will fall apart. Insofar as this has any plausibility, the relevant narrowness has to do with the seriousness of the commitment. But as we have seen, the idea that the commitment must be serious is in no way incompatible with extending the right to marry to same-sex couples.

The only other argument I can see is that licensing homosexual marriage is licensing homosexuality, licensing homosexuality is licensing licentiousness, and licentiousness will lead to the breakdown of the family, which will cause the breakdown of society. Thus it is to the moral status of homosexuality that we must turn.

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(9) *The Immorality of Homosexuality*

REPRESENTATIVE BOB BARR (R-GA): "The flames of hedonism, the flames of narcissism, the flames of self-centered morality are licking at the very foundations of our society: the family unit." REPRESENTATIVE COBURN: "I come from a district in Oklahoma who [sic] has very profound beliefs that homosexuality is wrong. . . . They base that belief on what they believe God says about homosexuality. . . . What they believe is, is [sic] that homosexuality is immoral, that it is based on perversion, that it is based on lust."

RESPONSE: Two reasons are given for why homosexuality is immoral: (1) religion says so, and (2) it is licentious. We have already looked at the religious argument and found it wanting. Not all religions agree, not even all mainstream religions. In addition, this country is based on a separation of church and state. That leaves the argument based on licentiousness.

I accept the premise that licentiousness is bad. If homosexuality were based on perversion or on lust, hedonism, or narcissism, it would be morally undesirable. The question is, what reason is there to think that homosexuality fits these descriptions?

Let's focus first on lust, hedonism, and narcissism. Some homosexuals act on the basis of lust, but so do some heterosexuals. Some homosexuals are hedonistic and narcissistic, but so are some heterosexuals. Even if these traits were more often found in homosexuals than heterosexuals, it is simply false that homosexuality is essentially based on any of them. The nature of the attraction and the reasons for forming relationships are essentially the same for homosexuals and heterosexuals. Sexual orientation determines the pool of people with whom one may form an intimate relationship, but it in no way determines the quality of the relationship one may form.

Perversion is a harder category to handle because it is unclear what is meant. It seems to convey the idea that homosexuality is in some way unnatural. But in what way? Like styrofoam, something not seen in nature? If that is what is meant, it is false. Other animals engage in homosexual behavior, as do members of all human societies. Is it that we were given a sex drive in order to reproduce? If that is the case, then all sexual intimacy that is not directed at reproduction is equally perverse. But who said the overriding purpose of our lives was to reproduce? This is a morality for rabbits, not humans. Yet anything more generous than this lapine morality, such as a morality that praised love and affection in their own right, would have another way to make sense of nonreproductive sexual activity—it can be a profound way of showing love and affection.

The question raised by the preceding review of the arguments in favor of the DOMA is, why do people think there is a deep connection between homosexuality and licentiousness? The underlying theory must be something like this: homosexuality is obviously wrong, and one would only engage in it if one were driven by lust or if one substituted some sort of hedonic principle for morality. This is so far from plausible, however, that one has to wonder why it has a grip on people.

My answer is that those who share this belief are moral authoritarians in the following sense. They are so certain and dogmatic about their moral convictions that they cannot see other points of view as reasonable alternatives. They cannot recognize as morally serious any position that values homosexual love as highly as heterosexual love. They have to dismiss it as a crude hedonic principle unworthy of the name of morality.

This analysis fits also with their belief that family and country are on the brink of disaster. If we, as a society, cease to endorse their principles, the result will be a moral free-for-all, chaos without norms. They cannot abide the thought that their moral view is merely one among many.

The same uncertainty and social instability that moral authoritarians cite as evidence that we are on the brink of chaos and social collapse, seem to me the growing pains of real moral progress: the growth of political equality. Among the most profound changes in this century is the extension of greater authority to women, blacks, and all those who had formerly been kept out of power. This change has necessarily been very

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disruptive to the norms of the old hierarchical order according to which women ruled over children, men over women, and white men over black people. In such a world everyone knew what was expected of him or her, and such knowledge was doubtless comforting (for most). But it was a world in which people were forced into roles regardless of how well they fit. And it was a world of unjustifiable privilege and authority for some, along with poverty and powerlessness for others. Breaking down the hierarchy that defined that world represents profound moral progress.

The demise of the old hierarchy has set a challenge for institutions such as marriage. Marriage will not again be stable until it can accommodate the equality of women. For this purpose, homosexual marriage, rather than being a threat, may actually provide a model. Same-sex partners will not be as tempted as different-sex-partners to assume that each person should do one kind of work. Same-sex partners will be more likely to think about how to share responsibility in an equitable way, dividing it flexibly, aiming to accommodate the real rather than the stereotyped differences in their tastes and skills. Of course, same-sex marriages may mimic the sex roles of different-sex marriages, and may suffer from lack of broad social support, but they are more likely to model egalitarian relations.

I don't expect everyone to agree that homosexual marriages could be a model for heterosexual marriages. But the current state of the law, perpetuated by the DOMA, does not respect the view that they could be. Instead, it establishes the moral beliefs of the majority as official state doctrine. Ultimately, this is no different from the establishment of a state religion. It flies in the face of our core liberal commitment to the proposition that basic rights and liberties should only be restricted as far as necessary to preserve goods that everyone can agree are important.

Helping families provide stable homes for children is doubtless an important, generally recognized social goal. But the connection between the goal and the suppression of homosexual unions is so dubious that it cannot possibly support the sweeping restriction on all such unions. And although a majority in America is currently against same-sex marriage, that majority is nowhere near the general consensus on the importance of such values as love and commitment.

Moral authoritarians don't want to accept the moral burden of justifying restrictions on basic rights and liberties. They see society as either for them or against them. But if they think that allowing homosexuals to marry would give some advantage to homosexuals, they are wrong. By allowing same-sex marriage, the state would not thereby favor homosexual marriage or the views of those who support it. It would simply de-privilege different-sex marriage. Admittedly, neutrality may not have neutral effects. Some values will flourish more than others in a free environment, while some may need the state to prop them up if they are to survive or remain prominent. But that is not the state's business, at least not if it conflicts with basic rights and liberties. Those who embrace traditional values should be free to argue for them in the marketplace of ideas, but they have no just claim for protectionist measures.

It is tempting to say that the DOMA is simply a small setback for homosexual rights. But it represents more than that. At bottom, it represents a failure to live up to the liberal commitment to protect basic rights and liberties, a failure to advance the cause of political equality, and a retreat into moral authoritarianism. □

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Zelda Bronstein

FEMINIST PUNDITS AND HILLARY CLINTON

When Erica Jong's hymn to Hillary Rodham Clinton appeared in the *Nation* last November, it was only the latest in a series of feminist tributes to the First Lady. In a March 1993 double salute to Mrs. Clinton and the first Take Our Daughters to Work Day, Anna Quindlen wrote in the *New York Times*: "Maybe some of our daughters took notice of how Hillary Clinton was seen as abrasive, power-hungry and unfeminine when to some of us she seemed merely smart, outspoken and hardworking." In October 1993, after Mrs. Clinton's testimony on health care had momentarily dazzled Congress, and again, in September 1994, after the demise of the Clintons' health care reform campaign, Ellen Goodman admiringly compared her to Eleanor Roosevelt. Blanche Wiesen Cook repeated the compliment in a January 1996 op-ed piece for the *New York Times*. A few weeks later, in the *Los Angeles Times*, Ruth Rosen placed Mrs. Clinton in "a distinguished reform tradition in our American past" that included Roosevelt and Jane Addams. Jong echoed these accolades and added her own: "H.R.C. is the latest incarnation of Miss Liberty. I'm glad she's a survivor. Her survival means I can survive."

The foregoing examples convey the sympathy, indeed the enthusiasm, with which most feminist pundits greeted Hillary Clinton. The sympathy I can understand; the enthusiasm seems odd. One might have thought, for example, that feminists—especially those who heralded the advent of a "First Partner" in the White House—would have taken the First Lady to task for her leading role in the disastrous campaign to overhaul health insurance, a fiasco so complete that it removed major health care reform from the national agenda. Feminists might have lobbied the president's mate in support of a single-payer model of health insurance and then reprimanded her, first, for having rejected that option out of hand and next, for having botched the subsequent political process. Instead, feminist objections were sparse and mostly muted.

Beyond a forgiving attitude toward the First Lady, this mix of adulation and conspicuous silence reveals a rhetorical style that often comes to the fore when feminists encounter sympathetic political figures, institutions, or ideas that are under fire. Begging the hard questions, this style squelches dialogue and narrows vision. It thereby further enfeebles the already debilitated women's movement. To put the muscle back into American feminism will require a bracing exchange about why we're in trouble.

What made it so hard for feminists to criticize the First Lady? How did their reticence bear more broadly on feminist politics? And how might we do things differently next time? To answer those questions, we need a better idea of what feminists said about Hillary Clinton.

For all their declared interest in the First Lady, most feminist commentators didn't pay much attention, critical or otherwise, to her prime political role—chairing the president's health care task force.

The major exception was Ellen Goodman. One of the First Lady's staunchest supporters and an eloquent advocate of universal coverage, Goodman repeatedly dedicated her syndicated column to Rodham Clinton and health care reform. In July 1994, when the Senate was balk-

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ing at universal coverage, Goodman suggested that the Senators replace the ample, publicly funded benefits bestowed on members of Congress and their families with the spotty provisions they were advocating for their constituents. The next month Goodman explained why any serious reform package had to include abortion. In other pieces, she defended the propriety of a policy making First Lady. Having cheered Mrs. Clinton on from the start, Goodman then had the mettle to admonish her at the end, though not without difficulty. The Clintons, she wrote in September 1994, "can blame [the loss of health care reform] on gridlock, on Republicans, on the media. Fair enough. But it was also bungled. I would be surprised if Hillary didn't share a sense of failure." No kidding. Goodman then backed off by adding, "Where do you go after you've walked into a propeller?" The tag cast Mrs. Clinton as a victim, when, as Goodman had just indicated, the "propeller" the First Lady walked into had been partly of her own making.

One of the few other feminists to probe Clinton's reforming efforts was Maryann Napoli. In the March/April 1994 issue of *Ms.*, Napoli wrote that her "hopes had soared" when she had learned that Mrs. Clinton would lead the task force. "I admire [her] intelligence and her self-assurance," Napoli said, "and I was impressed with the way she went around the country asking people to share their experiences and soliciting their advice. I wish I could be as enthusiastic about the health plan she and her advisers came up with." Despite its laudable provisions for universal coverage, the Clinton plan, she concluded, aimed more at "getting the bills paid" than at improving Americans' health.

Other feminist writers treated Hillary Clinton's foray into health care reform with greater dispatch. In a January 1995 essay in *Time* focusing on the First Lady's characterological contradictions, Barbara Ehrenreich, another vocal single-payer advocate, devoted a single, albeit deliciously caustic, sentence to Mrs. Clinton's part in the health care reform debacle: "Motivated by the noblest intentions, no doubt, she nonetheless came up with what was, from almost any ideological perspective, the health-care plan from hell." Ehrenreich followed up that blast by advising Clinton to stiffen her spine and ignore her critics. Katha Pollitt gave the subject even shorter shrift. In a 1993 essay in the *Nation* in which she assailed the First Lady's critics in the media, Pollitt noted in passing that as a single-payer supporter, she was no fan of Mrs. Clinton's politics.

With equal brevity but greater ideological circumspection, other feminist observers alluded approvingly to Rodham Clinton's politics without delving into their substance. Erica Jong remarked that the First Lady "claimed center stage with top policy issues—however politically naive she may have been," leaving the issues and the naiveté unspecified. Blanche Wiesen Cook contended that what "really made people angry" about the current First Lady was exactly what had galled the critics of Eleanor Roosevelt: "her political activism" per se. Where Roosevelt crusaded for housing, "Mrs. Clinton's cause," Cook wrote, "is, or was, health care." The closest Cook came to specifying Clinton's activism in behalf of health care was to express her own uncertainty about the First Lady's continued interest in her designated cause. Finessing the issue with greater smoothness, Ruth Rosen allowed only that "[Mrs. Clinton] has tried to promote the health care of all Americans."

Feminist pundits' cursory interest in the First Lady's campaign to reform health care was matched by their nonchalance about whether she should have taken the task force post in the first place. In an essay that appeared in *Glamour* in November 1992, Katha Pollitt reported that even before the election, Hillary Clinton's political role troubled some observers, including "many feminists" who resented her using her governor-husband's high office and his attempt to gain an even higher one to advance herself. Also worrisome were the larger political implications of the Clintons' tandem style. "I'm not voting for her," a friend told Pollitt. "I'm voting for him. We don't have a monarchy, where the whole family gets to run the country." Pollitt herself seemed ambivalent. She noted that plenty of First Ladies and other presidential relatives had pulled strings behind the scenes. "Maybe," she wrote, "it's time we learned to live openly with reality." But Pollitt ended up musing that by

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seeking power through a powerful man, Hillary Clinton has perhaps "sold herself—and women—short."

Six months later, Pollitt's doubts about Mrs. Clinton's feminist credentials had vanished. By then, the First Lady had become the head of the White House task force, Ted Koppel had devoted two installments of *Nightline* to the ominous implications of her open accession to public policy making, and rumors about the Clintons' private lives were circulating with abandon in the media. Enough already, said Pollitt. Writing in the *Nation*, she maintained that the real problem wasn't an overweening First Lady but rather her misogynist detractors. Pollitt also argued that "the sexist attack on Hillary Clinton is partly a lazy way to attack her husband" and above all an effort to avert the gender-inflected changes that, to many, the First Couple's partnership portended—for example, "the social shift to more egalitarian marriages; the growing political power of women...; [and] the mainstreaming of a popular you-can-do-it feminism."

Pollitt was right: the criticism of Hillary Clinton was in part a thinly veiled assault on the liberal agenda that the Clinton administration seemed to augur. Pollitt and other feminist writers (Ellen Goodman struck this theme again and again) rightly denounced the hateful and often obscene campaign against the First Lady. But in their eagerness to champion Mrs. Clinton and the feminist program she might have symbolized, most feminist observers disregarded criticism that arose from genuine feminist and democratic concerns.

None of them, for example, engaged Karen Lehrman's argument, published in the *New York Times* in July 1992, that Mrs. Clinton's problem "was not being too much of a feminist, but too little of one." After seconding other feminists' dismay about the then-would-be First Lady's makeover as a fifties housewife *à la* Harriet Nelson, Lehrman pointed out that "riding on [her husband's] coattails is just as much a betrayal of feminism, despite the fact that no prominent feminist has said as much." Lehrman went on to wonder why we should countenance a role for potential First Ladies that we'd find unacceptable for potential First Gentlemen. She criticized Mrs. Clinton's untoward political ambitions, manifest in her unseemly participation in her spouse's presidential campaign. Noting that the husbands of women who are running for office generally don't behave this way, Lehrman asked:

> What if Stewart Boxer, a lawyer specializing in workers' compensation cases, started playing an ostentatious role in Barbara's California Senate campaign? Wouldn't we resent him if he consistently filled in for her at campaign stops, gave substantial speeches and offered off-the-cuff comments?

But Hillary Clinton's behavior shouldn't be attributed solely to self-aggrandizement. What Lehrman called her "ostentatious role" also needs to be understood in terms of the sexual double standard that operates in our presidential politics.* Husbands of women candidates stay out of the limelight because nobody expects them to do otherwise, while the public and the media demand that a politician's wife actively aid her husband's campaign—to be sure, by appearing as his amenable helpmate, not his political partner. Hillary Clinton met the double standard halfway: she played the supportive wife, which was fine, and at the same time the political partner, which was not.

As Lehrman urged, the double standard for political spouses should be laid to rest. But if we continue to judge presidential candidates as embodiments of familial virtue rather than as public figures, holding presidential husbands and wives to a single standard could promote rather than preclude future First Partnerships. Indeed, the prospect of "public partnership marriages" was happily entertained by Ellen Goodman, who applauded Mrs. Clinton's willingness to be on the "frontline" of such ventures. In Goodman's view, Mrs. Clinton's problems had nothing to do with a betrayal of feminism. On the contrary, misogynist rants aside, the beleaguered First Lady was simply struggling with the general confusion about how two-career couples can consolidate their professional and marital lives.

* As the 1996 race revealed, the wives of presidential candidates are also subject to a partisan double standard: nobody criticized Elizabeth Dole's ostentatious intervention in *her* husband's campaign.

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Figuring out how to combine personal and professional independence with family and marital commitments is certainly a prime issue for the Clintons' generation. But since Hillary Clinton's quandary arises from her marriage to an elected official, it just doesn't bear comparison to the predicaments of most of her contemporaries. The issue here isn't achieving sexual parity or well-integrated two-career marriages, but ensuring accountability.

Any spouse as politically attuned as Hillary Clinton is going to have something to say about public policy. And presidents should be encouraged to take able counsel wherever they can find it. But taking counsel is different from giving a spouse an official portfolio. The advantage of the latter gesture would be to make the private, advisory role public and formal. But the problem of accountability would remain, given how easily political authority is confounded by marital ties.

That susceptibility created difficulties for Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt, as Doris Kearns Goodwin suggested in the sisterly pre-inaugural letter she addressed to Hillary Clinton in the January/February 1993 issue of *Mother Jones*. Goodwin noted that Eleanor Roosevelt's brief tenure as assistant director of the Office of Civil Defense "turned out to be a disaster" because, "after all, she was married to the president. The whole chain of command was out of whack." In the end, Roosevelt had to resign from the office. Goodwin urged Hillary Clinton to follow Eleanor Roosevelt's best example and to operate with vigor from the "first lady-ship" outside the administration, a proposal that no more interested Clinton than it did most feminist pundits.

The feminist response to the First Lady reveals two missed political opportunities. First, the furor over her wifely accession offered a chance to start disentangling presidential marriage from electoral politics. Next, the Clintons' campaign for health care reform opened space for an agenda that would have benefited American women in major ways. It behooves us to wonder why feminists by and large passed up both these opportunities.

To begin, taking on either of these issues would have meant reproving a First Lady already under attack from critics who wanted only to destroy her. Feminists were understandably reluctant to fault a woman so besieged. Indeed, a glance at Garry Wills's inventory of "Hillary-hating," which appeared in the *New York Review of Books* in November 1996, is almost enough to banish any thought of ever criticizing Mrs. Clinton again.

But it's one thing to protest a vicious attack and another to venerate its target. A discerning feminist punditry would distinguish brutal assault from reasoned critique by giving Mrs. Clinton her due as a political figure and then dealing with her record. It was good, in September 1993, to see the First Lady's dalliance with the politics of meaning coolly appraised by Wendy Kaminer in *Mirabella* and, in winter 1996, to find Mrs. Clinton's book on child-rearing and public policy, *It Takes a Village*, trenchantly reviewed by two feminist readers: Katha Pollitt in the *Nation* and Jean Bethke Elshtain in the *New Republic*. It would have been even better if more feminists had similarly inquired into her positions on health care and "public partnership marriage," especially when those issues were current. Instead, with few exceptions, feminists circled the wagons, ignoring some troubling questions (such as those raised by Lehrman and Goodwin) and openly dismissing others.

Take, for example, Ruth Rosen's dressing-down of Alexander Cockburn after he had severely panned Rodham Clinton's book in the *Nation*. Flying to Mrs. Clinton's defense, Rosen lumped Cockburn together with William Safire as fellow agents of a "splenetic sexism" who had variously attempted "the character assassination" of the First Lady. In fact, only Safire deserved such condemnation. In his *New York Times* column, Safire had called Mrs. Clinton a "congenital liar," whereas Cockburn had merely offered a provocative assessment of the "social-worker liberalism, otherwise known as therapeutic policing," that, he contended, informed *It Takes a Village*. Interestingly, Cockburn's appraisal was scarcely less charitable than Katha Pollitt's scathing evaluation of the book, which had appeared a week earlier in the *Nation* un-

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der the headline "Village Idiot." For some reason—feminist solidarity?—Rosen ignored Pollitt and went after Cockburn.

Pollitt, for her part, displayed an equally heedless disdain when she wrote off the First Lady's detractors in the media as jealous women and sexist men suffering from "status anxiety" and job insecurity. Like Rosen's conflation of Safire and Cockburn, the wholesale rebuke enabled Pollitt to assume a position of unimpeachable rectitude while identifying with a high-profile female victim of real abuse. But the sweeping gesture also led her to discount at least one tenable objection to the First Lady, the accusation of "false feminism" brought by Mickey Kaus in the February 15, 1993 issue of the *New Republic*. As Kaus noted, he was echoing Karen Lehrman's charge that Mrs. Clinton sought power through her husband's largesse rather than on her own merits. (In another intriguing parallel with Rosen, Pollitt overlooked Clinton's feminist, female critic and cited only the offending male pundit.) If the piling on of Hillary Clinton's enemies muffled feminists' reservations about her politics, feminist discourse was diminished and the First Lady yet further demeaned by such forbearance.

Feminists' difficulty in separating Hillary Clinton's feminist persona from her politics was part of their larger disinclination to upbraid women politicians and organizations deemed liberal, that is, at the very least, pro-choice. The dangers of such deference became grossly apparent at the end of Bill Clinton's first term in the White House. Not incidentally, a male observer sounded the alarm.

In October 1995, Robert Scheer, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, censured the senators from California, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, along with other pro-choice congresswomen who had supported the draconian welfare bill. Scheer singled out Feinstein's behavior as particularly offensive. He reported that, according to her press secretary, Feinstein stood by her vote because she believed that "the welfare system has created a chronic dependency." Outraged, Scheer exploded:

> Dependency? This from a senator who never had to work a day in her life until she decided to get on the public payroll. She's dependent all right, on rich parents and husbands who have bankrolled her career. That unfortunately is an option not available to most welfare mothers.

But Scheer had a bigger target: the feminists who had helped elect these officials, and who then, he claimed, stood by as they voted millions of women and children into beggary. Scandalized by the "deafening silence" of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the rest of the women's movement, including its advocates in the press, regarding the then-current proceedings on welfare legislation, Scheer wondered whether pro-choice women had much more regard for real children than did their hypocritical pro-life opponents.

Scheer's complaint may have jolted one feminist pundit into print. Nodding to him in her December 4, 1995, column in the *Nation*, Katha Pollitt slammed "electoral feminism" in the name of the "justifiably fed-up women voters, including me," who, importuned by EMILY's List and other PACs, had poured "energy, time, enthusiasm and most important, money" into the congressional campaigns of women candidates, only to see their hopes betrayed when those women got to Washington. For Pollitt, the betrayal went beyond the Senate vote on so-called welfare reform to congressional women's overall priorities: "playing toward the center, amassing campaign funds, keeping business and big donors happy, and currying favor with the leadership in the hope of receiving plums." In other words, Pollitt observed, these congresswomen were acting just like their venal male counterparts.

But where Scheer had grouped NOW and the California senators under the single rubric of callous pro-choice women, Pollitt distinguished "electoral" feminists from their "organized" sisters. NOW, she protested, had taken a principled stand during the congressional battle over welfare, only to find its efforts "totally ignored by the media." Then Pollitt suddenly moved from staunch defense to wistful admission. "Organized feminism," she wrote,

> is caught in a co-dependent relationship with electoral politics: No matter how often and how bla-

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tantly our hopes are betrayed, we keep coming back, begging to have our illusions rewoven for another bout at the polls.

"Why not," Pollitt went on to ask, "try something different?" Why not indeed?

For starters, we could demand more—much more—in return for our support. Too often a politician, especially a woman, has had only to declare a pro-choice stand in order to win feminist endorsements. Low programmatic expectations also help explain feminists' lack of interest in Hillary Clinton's tenure as health care czarina: feminists haven't made health care, aside from reproductive rights and breast cancer, a high priority.

Unfortunately, the task of pursuing an ambitious agenda is complicated by the weakness of the women's movement and the rest of the left. For the moment, especially at election time, doing the right, that is, politically astute, thing means choosing the lesser evil. So, for example, when Dianne Feinstein faced Michael Huffington in the 1994 race for the Senate, feminists properly swallowed their distaste for Feinstein's position on immigration and gave her their endorsement. What they also should have given her and other politicians of her ilk was the following message: Don't count on us after Election Day—we're going to be out organizing so that next time around we can back a candidate in good faith. It's not too late to make that threat, and one way to show we're serious is to expand the feminist agenda.

But as indicated by feminists' generally unsatisfying response to Hillary Clinton, our problems go beyond a skimpy program. They also have to do with a tendency to idealize, even idolize, smart, attractive women who are in high office. That impulse should be checked, as should yet another that figured in the First Lady's reception: the urge to dismiss opinions that challenge the prevailing feminist wisdom. If anything, we should welcome criticism.

In the past year a few hopeful signs appeared. Last summer, several prominent feminists—Martha Burk and Heidi Hartmann in the *Nation* and Betty Friedan in the *New Yorker*—urged the women's movement to broaden its agenda and embrace the issues that American women say they care about most: work and pay, violence, and health care. Pollitt, increasingly disenchanted with the feminist political establishment, now chastises not only elected officials but also the feminist leaders who kowtowed to Clinton when he signed the welfare bill and then lined up behind him in the presidential campaign. She has been joined by Barbara Ehrenreich, who, in the November issue of *Z Magazine* and more recently in the *New York Times*, deplored the "sycophancy" that Gloria Steinem and other leading feminists and progressives displayed toward the White House.

To be sure, it will take more than talk to get the women's movement to the point where it can seize its opportunities. But in a democracy, robust exchange is indispensable to political strength and agility. If we want people to listen to—and act on—what feminists have to say, we need a better conversation than the one we've just had about Hillary Clinton. □

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RESPONSES

Joanne Barkan

At first glance, Zelda Bronstein seems to make a half-dozen plausible arguments in "Feminist Pundits on Hillary Clinton": to start, feminist pundits didn't pay enough attention to the Clinton administration's health care reform effort; second, feminist pundits didn't pressure Hillary Rodham Clinton (HRC) hard enough for the single-payer model; third, they didn't criticize HRC long enough or hard enough for proposing a different model; fourth, they didn't criticize HRC long enough or hard enough for bungling the entire reform effort; fifth, they didn't debate "public partnership marriage" sufficiently with respect to its effect on women or the issue of power without accountability; and sixth, by muting their criticism of HRC and other women with political clout, feminist pundits have squelched dialogue and further enfeebled an already debilitated women's movement.

I call Bronstein's arguments plausible, but I don't find them convincing. She evaluates criticism of Rodham Clinton in quantitative terms (how hard? how much? how long?), but these criteria remain vague and subjective. She insists the feminist pundits did too little; the pundits can counter that they did plenty; and there we are—at an unenlightening impasse. Quantitative standards obviously work well in some evaluations, but they don't in Bronstein's article. Her scattered examples from the work of almost twenty writers don't add up to a compelling case.

The overall picture of feminist pundits on Rodham Clinton gets more muddled when Bronstein describes (as she should) how several pundits changed their positions over time and criticized HRC more vigorously. Yes, they did say the correct thing here and there, but even the improved positions didn't satisfy Bronstein. Too little, too late. In the end, the pundits let the rest of the feminist world down by never adequately defending what Bronstein assumes to be feminist positions on health care and political partnership marriages.

What troubles me most are Bronstein's implicit presuppositions. She assumes that feminism is so monolithic that all people calling themselves feminists should hold the same positions on health care and political partnership marriages. Feminists—by definition, it seems—have single-payer health care as a top priority; feminists don't approve of politicians appointing their unelected spouses to important policy-making positions because spouses have too much access to power. I'm a feminist who happens to agree with these positions, but I don't understand why the positions are inherently feminist.

The single-payer health care model comes from the socialist tradition, from the left. As a functioning system in the real world, it belongs to the "classic" social democratic program that many European nations implemented after the Second World War. Many feminists might support single payer because it looks like the most just and humane model, but other feminists might not support it; they might want less government in health care, they might not favor the redistribution of resources, they might not be leftists.

We used to make helpful distinctions between different kinds of feminists—liberal feminists, radical feminists, socialist feminists, bourgeois feminists, and so on. It was easy to imagine an upper-middle-class woman who fervently supported the right to abortion and wanted to smash the glass ceiling in employment but didn't care about public funding for abortions for poor women. She could legitimately call herself a (liberal) feminist and not support single-payer health care.

Bronstein, however, seems to assume that feminists are leftists by definition; then she uses

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this particular world of feminism as the setting for her entire discussion of health care reform and as the standard for evaluating a slew of writers and Hillary Rodham Clinton. In the case of HRC, rejecting the single-payer model probably had more to do with her not being a leftist than with her inadequate feminism.

Of course, unlike Rodham Clinton, many of the feminist pundits whom Bronstein criticizes consider themselves leftists and supporters of single payer. But why does Bronstein expect left feminist writers as politically diverse as Erica Jong, Ruth Rosen, and Katha Pollitt to prioritize issues the same way or to argue them with the same intensity?

I think similarly flawed assumptions muddy the way Bronstein analyzes the political partnership marriage. She criticizes HRC's appointment to head the health care task force primarily because of the potential abuse of power. She expects feminist pundits to do the same. Yet one can imagine a nonfeminist liberal or a principled conservative (admittedly a rare breed) condemning HRC's appointment on exactly the same grounds—as a violation of democratic principles. It doesn't make sense to analyze this violation in terms of feminism. On the contrary, one can imagine a feminist giving highest priority to increasing women's power in Washington and to creating a visible model for new marriage roles and therefore supporting HRC's appointment.

I agree with a generalized—and obvious—version of Bronstein's point about muted criticism: if feminists, leftists, environmentalists, human rights activists, and others want credibility and support, they must speak out when they see violated principles and policy mistakes. But they'll speak more forcefully when their underlying assumptions are sorted out.

Barbara Ehrenreich

Ever eager to see progressives detach themselves from the pair of miscreants in the White House, I welcome Zelda Bronstein to the growing circle of feminist Hillary-haters. But I do so only with grave misgivings. Bronstein has failed to sample my own vast *oeuvre* of anti-Hillary writings, and the one article she cites she maliciously spins in a pro-Hillary direction. To set the record straight, my career as a Hillary-ologist goes back to the summer of '92, when I attacked her in *Newsday* for her Stepford-like transformation in the wake of the great cookie-making scandal. This was followed by numerous bitter—some would say vicious—assaults on the First Lady for setting back the cause of health reform by another decade or so. "It takes cunning to devise a health plan that both liberals and conservatives can deeply hate," I wrote in *Mirabella* in 1996, "and it takes arrogance verging on malice to do the devising in such profound secrecy that any small-d democrat, liberal or conservative, has to hate it before it even sees light."

Bronstein seems only to have read a 1995 essay on Hillary I did for *Time*—and she doesn't seem to have read it too carefully. I did not advise Clinton "to stiffen her spine and ignore her critics" (myself being, as I saw it, prominent among them). I was writing to criticize her wuss-like response to the news that Newt Gingrich had called her a "bitch"—which was to invite Gingrich and his mom to tea. Better, I said, to accept that venerable label with pride.

The *oeuvre* continues with the aforementioned article in *Mirabella,* where I suggested that Clinton spends much of her time in a Valium-like trance of denial and went on to assail her status as a feminist role-model. To again quote myself:

> . . . Hillary is not under attack for being a strong, independent woman with ideas. One, she's not a strong, independent woman. And two, there are no ideas—at least none she has ever expressed with any clarity or held on to with firmness and conviction. The flak she draws may be 60 percent right-wing spite, but the rest is fully earned.

Most recently, I published an article in the *LA Weekly* (the issue distributed at the Democratic convention) revealing what actually went on in Clinton's conversations with Eleanor Roosevelt. For those who missed it, the article

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sheds new light on the Hillary's loathsome combination of narcissism, vanity, and obsessive self-pity.

Have I called her a sociopath—a criminal, or an enemy of little children? Not yet, though if she continues to cover up her Catherine de Medici-like role in the White House and to stand by the man who wrecked welfare, that may well be my next step. But will Bronstein be listening?

Erica Jong

Zelda Bronstein finds it odd that feminists like me, Anna Quindlen, Ellen Goodman, Katha Pollitt, and Blanche Weisen Cook would be delighted to have a First Lady like Hillary Rodham Clinton after twelve years of Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush. I find it odd that she finds it odd!

So accustomed were we to presidents' wives who ran the White House with the aid of astrologers or refrained from influencing their husbands on the issue of reproductive choice that we were thrilled to see a woman of our own inclinations in the White House. There she was, juggling family and career, being the main breadwinner, refusing to hide her considerable brain, and telling her husband exactly what she thought. It was about time that the White House looked like America. Ours was an emotional reaction that grew even more emotional when we saw the media try to destroy Hillary Clinton for being exactly like us. We were inclined to be generous to the president's wife because we knew how much guts it takes to publicly refuse to be a female eunuch. We knew because we had walked in her high-heeled shoes. Our feet hurt, and so, we assumed, did hers. Sick of a so-called feminism that found endless reasons for women to trash other women, we wanted to show our sisterly support.

When I said that Hillary didn't shrink from policy issues, I meant the health care issue. And when I said "politically naive," I meant that both Clintons underestimated the power of the insurance companies and other corporate giants who support the status quo. Both Clintons promised things they couldn't deliver and lost a lot of respect in the process. But that Hillary Clinton had taken on an almost-impossible task was also clear. She still deserves respect for putting health care on the national agenda—even if she failed. Her successor will succeed—eventually. HMOs have now become so greedy that they are inviting the regulation that will eventually bring them down. The wheels of politics grind exceedingly slow. But Hillary Rodham Clinton's efforts will not be entirely in vain.

How can feminists both bash Hillary Clinton and support her? Politics is the art of compromise. The left, feminists included, usually winds up out of power because of an inability to compromise. Being in power means compromise. Being in opposition allows for the luxury of nitpicking. I fervently wanted to give Hillary Clinton the support I have not always been given by feminists. I wanted to set an example of sisterhood. While I was anything but uncritical of her either in the *Nation* or in the longer piece I wrote for the Sunday *Times* of London, I thought it was important to present my criticisms in the spirit of affirmation. I know how hard it is for any woman to be public without mouthing platitudes of nineteenth-century femininity. I know how hatefully misogynistic the media can be. I know how horrid women—feminists included—can be to other women. I know how dire is the punishment for being a female pioneer. I admired the First Lady and wanted to give her the strength that admiration confers. I still do.

I want to remind Zelda Bronstein that we are still in the dawn of time where gender equity is concerned. When we have advanced to equality, we will perhaps be able to sacrifice our heroines. For the moment we need all we can get.

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Katha Pollitt

Zelda Bronstein thinks I've been too easy on Hillary Rodham Clinton. Maybe that was so in 1992, when I published articles in *Glamour* and in the *Nation* that explored the extent to which criticism of HRC was motivated by sexism and/or political conservatism. Since those early days, however, I've criticized the First Lady in piece after piece. I have also written reams about the cooptation of the liberal feminist organizations (along with other social-justice groups, like the Children's Defense Fund, and labor unions) by their closeness to the Democratic party. I've castigated the Democratic women senators and representatives who were elected as women's champions and then, among other misdeeds, voted for welfare reform. I've attacked EMILY's List and Donna Shalala (whom Bronstein rather uncritically calls a feminist, despite her despicable role in welfare reform). I wrote *two* pre-election columns urging *Nation* readers not to vote for Clinton, and a post-inaugural column pointing out the folly of liberals who imagined Clinton would move to the left in his second term. Indeed, if my *Nation* columns have had a theme for the last three years, it's been the dashing of liberal illusions (including a few of my own) about Hillary and Bill, the Democratic party, and the big liberal advocacy organizations. I never, ever compared Hillary Clinton to Eleanor Roosevelt. What more does Zelda Bronstein want?

Bronstein prefers the stands on Hillary Clinton taken by Mickey Kaus, perhaps the most influential basher of welfare mothers in the mainstream press; Alexander Cockburn, who reprinted in his *New York Press* column Internet pornography featuring Hillary as a lesbian dominatrix; and Robert Scheer, who wrote that both Clarence Thomas and Bob Packwood were the victims of "radical feminists." I think all three men exemplify the discomfort with strong women and powerful women—in Kaus's case, maybe women, period—that percolates through criticism of the First Lady, and through the left and right critiques of liberal feminism, too. There's a glee and a dismissiveness that goes beyond political differences—differences that sometimes, when the dust of rhetoric has settled, aren't even that big. After all, having attacked the National Organization for Women (NOW) for raising insufficient ruckus against the Personal Responsibility Act, Scheer wrote in the *Nation* that he felt "pretty good" about the re-election of Clinton, the man who signed it into law! Scheer and NOW, it seems to me, have the same politics: both stand to the left of Clinton and criticize his policies, while remaining captive to the lesser-of-two-evils idea.

Bronstein's suggestion that I went after Kaus and not Karen Lehrman out of feminist solidarity makes me wonder how familiar she is with feminism (or journalism). I disagree publicly with other feminists all the time—Naomi Wolf, Gloria Steinem, Susan Estrich, Ellen Goodman, and so on. So why would I avoid mentioning Lehrman, whose entire career, Bronstein seems not to realize, is based on attacking the women's movement as hopelessly p.c.? (Even so, I prefer her to Bronstein's other "feminist," Jean Bethke Elshtain, doughty crusader against divorce and gay marriage.) Probably I just missed Lehrman's article. It happens.

About the issue of spouses getting power and plums through marriage: of course it's wrong, but so are inherited wealth, family connections, the old-boy network, and the fact that a Harvard degree opens more doors than one from Queens College. To get in a lather about HRC's position in the administration strikes me as a good example of that "rectitude" Bronstein criticizes me for. Should Hillary Clinton be the *only* Friend of Bill without a government post, the only member of the Arkansas business elite to stand idly by while jobs and perks and boodle are ladled out? Lehrman's disapproval of women's obtaining power through their husbands' influence would carry more weight with me if it were part of a broader critique of social privilege. Why single out wives, except to ride prejudices about female incompetence, petticoat government, feminist cabals, and monstrous regiments of women about to take over?

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Naturally, I'm opposed to unqualified and incompetent people getting jobs because of their connections, marital or otherwise. But twofer hirings are part of modern life. In academia spouses are often hired together, sometimes when only one is truly desired or needed, a practice that distorts hiring decisions and disadvantages single people of both sexes. But then marriage itself disadvantages singles, as supporters of gay marriage point out, and gives men many privileges in the workplace (and women many disadvantages) that go mostly unremarked. I'll get riled up about qualified and competent wives who get jobs through their husbands' influence as soon as husbands start losing promotions for having the unfair advantage of their wives' domestic labor, child-care services, and secretarial help.

If Zelda Bronstein wants me to agree that marriage is an unfair, oppressive, and sexist institution, I'm there. Maybe Hillary should get a divorce and make us both happy.

Ruth Rosen

Hillary Clinton is neither a saint nor a monster. Although I share Zelda Bronstein's distaste for feminist sycophancy, I think she fails to grasp—amid all the disappointments—what is genuinely laudable about our First Lady.

Blaming Hillary Clinton for "losing" the battle for universal health care is as absurd as condemning Truman for "losing" China. It was never hers to lose. The health care industry accounts for one-eighth of the nation's gross national product. Her very effort, though badly bungled, mobilized formidable political and economic opposition. The insurance industry launched an enormously successful public relations and lobbying campaign. The most comfortable and wealthy Americans, moreover, demonstrated little political will to tax themselves to pay for the health care of the poor. Although I, too, supported a single-payer plan, most Americans did not. In California, our single-payer plan was overwhelmingly defeated by a well-financed campaign underwritten by the insurance industry.

In retrospect, it would have been easier to nationalize the railroad, automobile, and aviation industries than to redistribute 12 percent of the nation's wealth for health care reform.

In short, the First Lady could not reverse Americans' growing distrust of government and their deepening distaste for helping the poor. Nor could she prevail against the awesome medical insurance industry. Bill and Hillary tried, but Harry and Louise won.

Afterward, Hillary Clinton became the lightning rod for the right. Silenced by relentless criticism in her own country, she gradually realized that she had to export her progressive agenda to other parts of the globe. The media, however, ensured that her message would be muted.

When she and her daughter visited India, the First Lady publicized the success of development programs that loan village women small sums of money with which to start their own cottage businesses. The women rapidly pay back the loans, gain some economic independence, and raise their standard of living.

When the First Lady returned home, she called for American financial institutions to offer small loans to poor American women, whom banks usually reject. Small enterprises, she argued, might free poor women from their dependence on welfare or abusive relationships.

Few Americans recall her advocacy of these development programs. When Hillary Rodham Clinton changes her hair style, reporters demand a political explanation and speculate on the symbolic meaning of her new coiffure. But when the First Lady travels abroad, the American media trivialize her speeches and publish photographs that spotlight Hillary and Chelsea riding an elephant, watching hippos, or admiring floral displays.

At the Fourth World Women's Conference at Beijing in 1995, Hillary Clinton gave a keynote speech that boldly defended women's rights as human rights. Defying the moral relativism

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that supports patriarchal power, she endorsed the (controversial) universal right to call a custom—genital mutilation, sexual slavery, arranged marriage, rape, dowry deaths, or wife beating—a crime. The American media, however, ignored the substance of her speech and focused on the rain, the mud, and Chinese official interference.

Last March, Hillary Clinton and Chelsea visited six African nations during a two-week "goodwill" tour. In each country, the First Lady held meetings with highly educated powerful women leaders and used her visibility to publicize their concerns. In Tanzania, she informed the press that women urgently needed better reproductive health care, as well as basic educational and vocational opportunities. In Zimbabwe, she publicized the threat of AIDS to women and the pandemic domestic violence women encounter in that country. Far from the White House, Hillary Clinton felt free to criticize the widespread poverty and violence that American women endure as well.

I agree that "organized" feminism failed poor women and children. We should have had a One Million Woman March in the capital. Still, progressive "unorganized feminists"—including the female pundits Bronstein has targeted—tried to mobilize public opinion years before the bill was signed. Some of us founded a National Campaign for Media Fairness on Welfare. We sent "fact sheets" to newspaper and magazine editors and television producers; we placed welfare mothers on radio and television programs; we wrote columns and spoke out against the demonization of poor women. One hundred well-known feminist writers, scholars, and activists signed a petition against welfare cuts and raised the funds to publish it in national newspapers. Some of us staged marches and demonstrations. Sadly, these efforts received little attention and seemed to have escaped the attention of both Zelda Bronstein and Robert Scheer, whom she quotes. With such few numbers, we failed to reverse the political climate that demonized poor women.

It is difficult to predict Hillary Clinton's future place in history. She has been shadowed by serious scandals and allegations. Despite her progressive advocacy abroad, she has failed to protect poor women and children in her own country. When the president signed the so-called welfare reform legislation, the First Lady stood mute as her husband dismantled sixty years of guaranteed assistance to the poor. What, we ask ourselves, did she do, if anything, to prevent that fatal decision? We don't know the answer. What, we ask, could she have done? Resign office? Perhaps in 2000, but not in the middle of her husband's presidency.

How then, shall we evaluate Hillary Clinton?

What few people grasp is how she has reinvented the role of First Lady, turning herself into an international activist who fights on the international stage for what she cannot—or will not—struggle for in her own country. Yes, talk is cheap. But in the end, I believe that her most important legacy will be her persistent promotion of an expanded vision of democracy. In her book *It Takes a Village*, and in every nation she has visited, Rodham Clinton has passionately argued that a democracy cannot succeed if it devalues women and children.

Don't be surprised if this simple yet elegant principle has a greater global impact than anything Bill Clinton will accomplish during his presidency. □

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Zelda Bronstein Replies

I end my article by calling for a better feminist conversation. Joanne Barkan's response is what I have in mind, not because I agree with everything she says—I don't—but because she meets the issues, and does so in a manner that invites real dialogue.

Barkan persuades me that my premises need clarification, and, in one instance, a significant edit. She thinks I regard all feminists as leftists—a false impression that I partly attribute to my reference to "the women's movement and the rest of the left." In fact, I expect American feminists to be—not leftists, but democrats (so strike "the rest of" from the foregoing citation).

Here are some of the other assumptions that inform my argument: Health care reform is a profoundly democratic issue; thus I expect it to interest feminists. Single-payer is the most equitable model of health insurance available; therefore I expect feminists to endorse it. Political nepotism threatens democratic accountability; therefore I expect feminists to question it. If feminists aren't democrats and/or don't support single-payer and/or resign themselves to official nepotism, especially the marital variety, I want to know why.

In other words, I'm looking for an all-out debate over feminist politics. It's the wish for such an exchange rather than the quest for a single-minded feminism that moved me to write "Feminist Pundits." Contrary to Barkan's claim, I consider not only when and how many feminists assessed Hillary Clinton's career in health care reform, but also how they went about it. The problem wasn't only that most feminist commentators said "too little, too late"; it was their unwillingness to confront hard questions. Barkan's rejoinder is a welcome, regrettably rare exception.

On the other hand, it's hard to see how the political dialogue is advanced by the quibbling, acutely personal replies of Katha Pollitt and Barbara Ehrenreich. Pollitt insinuates that I simply pan her appraisals of Rodham Clinton, when actually I give them an emphatically mixed review. Among other things, I approvingly echo her request that feminists "try something different" from the adulation of pro-choice dignitaries. I'll echo it again, in paraphrased form, as a query for Pollitt herself: why not try a more collaborative approach to (feminist) discourse?

I put the same question to Ehrenreich. It turns out that her "grave misgivings" about me pertain to my having seen only one of her numerous attacks on Hillary Clinton and hence having concluded that she has been too generous to the First Lady. Having now read her *Mirabella* piece, I retract any aspersions I cast on her for having hung back in her criticism. The fact is, however, that I also laud both her mordant characterization of the Clinton plan and her critique of feminist truckling to the White House. As Ehrenreich realizes, we share some major political commitments. Given these common goals, it would have been more interesting if she had responded to my suggestions for revitalizing feminist politics.

By contrast, Erica Jong and Ruth Rosen, with whom I have some major differences, do address broader issues of rhetoric and political strategy. Rosen's comments about feminists' efforts in behalf of poor women and children are well-taken—as far as they go. We need to go further and ask why those efforts turned out "such few numbers" and what tactics promise greater success. Along the same lines, what's missing from both Rosen's and Jong's accounts of the politics of health care reform is any consideration of how feminists may have abetted the victory won by "Harry and Louise" and their corporate sponsors. Rosen and Jong, moreover, make far too many excuses for Hillary Clinton.

At the same time, Rosen not only recognizes that feminists have made mistakes but admits to some complicity in those errors. Without such an acknowledgment, we remain stuck in a morass of self-righteousness; with it, we take partial responsibility for our current predicament and thereby open the possibility of moving beyond it.

A final note: Hillary Clinton wrote off single-payer because, as Barkan observes, she's not a

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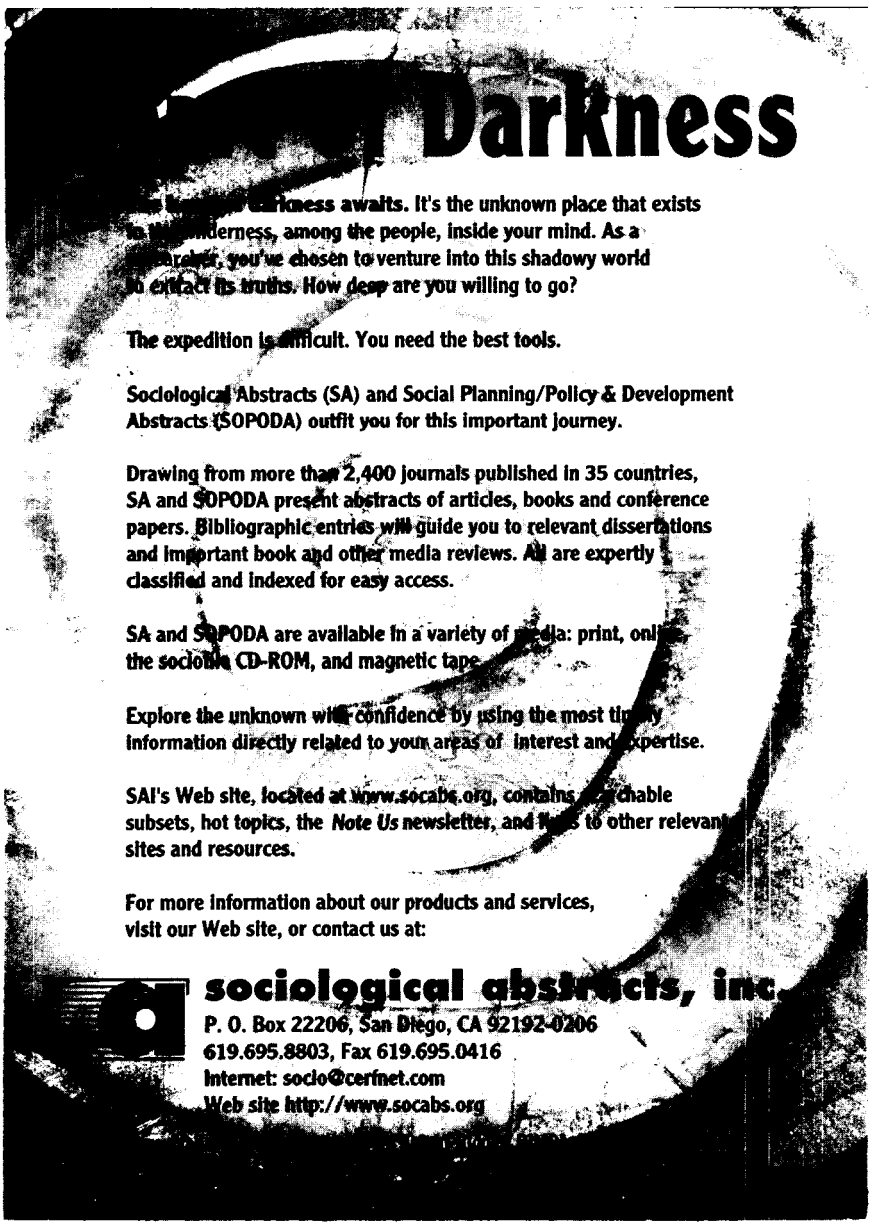
leftist, but also—and of greater significance—because she and her husband came under negligible political pressure to support it. Of course, as Rosen and Jong contend, the insurance industry marshaled a formidable opposition—what else would we expect? The question whose answer could make a political difference is: how do we fight back? A vigorous women's movement could have helped mobilize a campaign for publicly funded universal health care, with a host of feminist pundits helping to lead the way.* Feminist critics' treatment of Hillary Clinton offers lessons as to why such leadership didn't materialize in the last round, and what needs to change if it is to emerge in the next.□

*While they were at it, they could have helped formulate an argument that spoke in an American idiom, pointing out, for example, that in a corporatized medical economy, patients' freedom of choice requires government protection.


Darkness
awaits. It's the unknown place that exists
derness, among the people, inside your mind. As a
you've chosen to venture into this shadowy world
extract its truths. How deep are you willing to go?
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George Packer

DECENCY AND MUCK

The Visions of John Sayles and Oliver Stone

If any left-wing points of view still reach the broad American public, it's usually by some accident of mass culture. Bruce Springsteen rose to fame independently of his Guthrie-like sentiments for the poor and oppressed (the more they dominate his music, the less popular he's been); Al Franken achieved stardom on *Saturday Night Live* before he became the best-selling author of *Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot*. Spike Lee is a more complicated example, because with him the distinction between ideology and careerism completely disappears (for example, his demand that black high school students get the day off to see *Malcolm X*). In general, though, it's rare for a hero of popular culture to reach that status through work in which left-wing views are intrinsic. Almost always they're pinned to celebrity like red ribbons on tuxedo lapels and gown bodices at televised awards ceremonies.

But at least two exceptions come to mind—the filmmakers Oliver Stone and John Sayles. Since the eighties they have been turning out movies that attempt to portray and interpret America with some consistent degree of sympathy for the downtrodden and suspicion of the powerful. Stone and Sayles put the individual stamp of writer-director on all the movies they make, and they have high ambitions for movies that encompass the large moral and social questions of our day—that try to fill the role that novels played in the nineteenth century. Both directors started out with literary dreams. Sayles has published three novels and a collection of stories; the rejected manuscript of Stone's youthful and only novel ended up in the East River. Both were products of the sixties (Stone was born in 1946, Sayles in 1950). Both are lovers of history.

Yet Stone and Sayles make a study in contrasts. On the most obvious level, it's a contrast in styles and personalities. Stone is notorious, an icon of op-ed pages, every movie leaving behind its own wake of controversy (most recently *The People vs. Larry Flynt*, which he produced but didn't direct). An awed yet ultimately devastating *New Yorker* profile several years ago showed Stone bullying employees, goading cast and crew, going through women like cans of film stock—all the while murmuring about his "darkness" and complaining that the press has been unfair to him. He's also neck-deep in Hollywood culture, his movies backed by major studios. Sayles, by all accounts, keeps a low, Hoboken, N.J. profile with his girlfriend-producer of two decades, Maggie Renzi. There's an atmosphere of good spirits and mutual regard among the cast in all his films. Some of them come and go so noiselessly that you have to track them down on video.

But the contrast is deeper and more interesting, and in a way it goes back to the sixties. It's the difference between reasonableness and paranoia, collective hope and individual excess, the Port Huron Statement and Mark Rudd. Sayles says, "Basically I'm for whatever makes people's lives better and against what doesn't." Stone says, "You have to recreate the climate of madness in the culture. The world is violent, and we're swamped in it in this century. So I mirror that—I'm a distorting mirror, like in the circus."

Sayles's first picture, *The Return of the Secaucus Seven* (1980), was an ensemble piece

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about the loves and ennuis of a group of ex-radicals reunited for a thirtieth birthday party. It doesn't hold up well—the camera work looks amateurish, and the dialogue, which must have resonated with Sayles's peers at the end of the seventies, for the movie became a cult hit, seems to drag on aimlessly. But this first movie became the prototype for Sayles's mature work, *Matewan*, *Eight Men Out*, *City of Hope*, and last year's *Lone Star*—all detailing the relationships, personal and social, among a range of characters, all concerned with justice. They feel like the work of a man who came of age reading Nelson Algren novels and living in group houses. The style is understated, the pace often slow, the cinematography simple. Three or four plots are woven together, suggesting a theme of mutual responsibility—between white, black, and Italian coal miners (*Matewan*), or whites and blacks in a decaying East Coast city (*City of Hope*), or Anglos and Mexicans in a Texas border town (*Lone Star*). The dialogue is earnest, the humor without irony and often symbolic, like the fragmentary slogans rattled off by a homeless man who walks through *City of Hope* as a deranged Greek chorus: "Help. We need help. We got deals. Under one roof. Why settle for less when you can have it all." Few of Sayles's scenes remain vividly in mind; what you remember are the speeches. From *Matewan* you remember the union organizer Joe Kenehan, played by Chris Cooper, telling a roomful of miners who have just rebuffed a black scab named Few Clothes: "You think this man is your enemy? This is a worker. Any union keeps this man out ain't a union. It's a goddam club. They've got you fightin' white against colored, native against foreigner, hollow against hollow, when you know there ain't but two sides to this world—them that work and them that don't."

For a moviemaker who is at heart a writer, working in a visual form without narrative depth, there's a serious risk of didacticism and sentimentality that Sayles doesn't always escape. His characters have to state baldly what a novel's narrator could explore suggestively and with less finality. There is too much thematic talk in Sayles's films, and in his latest and perhaps best, *Lone Star*, there are at least two too many subplots, included strictly for topical value—sexual harassment in the military and illegal immigration. One can see these same tendencies in Sayles's novel *Union Dues* (1977), about Third Way radicals in Boston at the end of the sixties and the West Virginia boy who stumbles into them—the huge cast of characters, the cross-cutting between plots, the clamor of diverse opinions, the love of working-class speech, the temptation to cram a whole city and a dozen issues into one book.

A child of the sixties, Sayles belongs temperamentally to an earlier period of radicalism. His main characters aren't alienated rebels, but working people ensnared in mundane obligations to family, job, town. His vision of community isn't a dropout's utopia held together by love but a town divided by social class in which individuals are faced with old-fashioned moral choices. Will the chief of police stand up to the coal company's thugs? Will a building contractor cut a corrupt deal with the mayor to keep his son out of jail? Will the sheriff of a Texas border town pursue the truth about a racial incident that might discredit his long-dead and lionized father? Will an illiterate baseball player take a bribe to fix the World Series?

Ordinary people in all-American settings struggling for courage, justice, tolerance: it's reminiscent of the Popular Front era, and of films by directors like Capra and Ford. The ghosts of Gary Cooper, Henry Fonda, and James Stewart hover around the sets of these movies. To Sayles, most people are basically decent, or at least try to be. Few of his characters are out-and-out villains—more often they go wrong when pushed or cornered, and the consequences haunt them, and in the end they always find that they are their brothers' keepers.

It's a hopeful, goodhearted view of human beings. And, needless to say, it isn't a view attuned to either the tastes of the consuming public or the spirit of the age. The budgets of Sayles's movies preclude wide distribution, and before he decided to stop seeking studio backing his story ideas made for extremely brief meetings with Hollywood executives. But beyond the circumstances of the market, what keeps him out of the mainstream is his seriousness, his cin-

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ematic plainness, his sense of political responsibility and moral decency. From a commercial point of view, the worst that can be said of Sayles is that he is sincere.

The first thing that needs to be said about Oliver Stone is what most of his critics won't admit: he is an extremely talented filmmaker, far more visually inventive than Sayles and even—at his best—a better screenwriter. Stone's first important film, *Salvador* (1985), is proof that he once had a strong gift for story and characterization. *Salvador* manages to create all at once an authentic atmosphere of menace building into terror, a sharp sense of the turn in American policy from Carter to Reagan, and—in James Woods' performance as a fast-talking small-time journalist on the trail of a big story as El Salvador slides into civil war—a distastefully riveting central character, a figure from the sleazy, irresponsible seventies as the decade burns out at the dawn of Reagan-era American boosterism.

In the twelve years since *Salvador* Stone has made nine movies—none of them as good. The way in which he has squandered his talents displays both the benefits and the high costs of making yourself a "distorting mirror" in a "climate of madness." In fact, the story of Oliver Stone's career seems natural material for a film by Oliver Stone: set in the Philippines and the Arizona desert and Hollywood, with two ex-wives in supporting parts, a large cast of attractive female extras, huge quantities of drugs, an unrelenting work pace, black-and-white flashbacks to his parents' divorce when he was fifteen, Oscar nights, media hysteria, and at the center of everything an attractive, cruel man of outsized ambition and ego who starts off with a desire to be the Joseph Conrad of cinema and ends up riding horseback for the cameras with Subcommander Marcos in Chiapas—who over the course of the film becomes harder and harder to distinguish from the cheap, glamorous, violent culture that his films portray. The early part of the film would have the grainy realism of *Salvador*, but the camerawork would grow increasingly distorted, with rapid-fire cuts and long bacchanals on and off the set, and by the end Stone's character would appear literally as a cartoon grotesque in the manner of *Natural Born Killers*. *Stone* would be a mirror of a mirror, perfectly suited to its director-subject's hyperkinetic style. Watching it, moviegoers would get to see a fine artistic and political consciousness lose its bearings before their eyes.

Except for *Heaven and Earth*, which almost no one saw, I've caught every one of Stone's films when it first came out. *Platoon* (1986), which followed *Salvador*, moved and terrified me and I left the theater feeling that I had been to hell. The familiar streets home seemed an illusion; the truth lurked underneath and it was dark and extreme. At twenty-five I accepted the implication that Vietnam was more real than Somerville, Massachusetts, and that I had to have the courage to face the demon of violence.

Nothing afterward matched *Platoon*'s power, but I kept going to see Stone's films, for two reasons—his subjects, which are always interesting, and his cinematic style, which has grown increasingly riveting. The furor in the press over *JFK* (1991) seemed unnecessary, because the movie's politics were so ludicrous; in the movie theater its techniques—slow motion, extreme close-ups, multiple angles, off-camera voices, blended film stocks, newsreel footage, fast tracking shots—were tremendously exciting. And for its first hour *Natural Born Killers* (1994), Stone's most viscerally violent and reviled film, felt like a wild ride through the most startling cinematic imagery I'd ever seen. It evoked the mental world of its homicidal young lovers—a pulsing blend of music, television, psychedelic mysticism, adolescent syrup, and casual viciousness—more convincingly than straightforward realism in the John Sayles vein could have done.

Excitement is not the easiest emotion to produce and sustain, as anyone who's sat through a big-budget action picture knows. Evoking feverish interest takes a crude narrative intelligence together with technical skill. I began to recognize this emotion as the characteristic experience of a Stone movie, the experience that kept me coming back even when the movie was bound to be as silly as *The Doors*: feeling grabbed and jostled, crowded, rushed, dazzled, unable to think. Each film depended more and more on

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the editing room—on confusion—for its effect. When I sat down recently to watch some of them again on video, it became clear how much that effect requires the large screen of a movie theater. Even *Platoon*, with its good-and-evil sergeants and mythic structure and swelling music of Barber's "Adagio for Strings," comes off badly diminished. The shrunken visual scope magnifies the text, especially the painfully obvious voiceover of its young hero Chris Taylor (Charlie Sheen), a character who starts off convincingly high-minded and frightened but makes less and less sense as his creator plunges him into moral conflict. In the theater this didn't matter—the movie had me by the throat.

For most of Stone's movies, emphasizing the text turns out to be fatal. In *JFK* Kevin Costner/Jim Garrison's case against a supposed assassination conspirator goes to pieces before your eyes; never was a movie trial's verdict less surprising and more deserved. Parts of *JFK* have the inadvertently hilarious quality of a movie-of-the-week. "There's nothing wrong with feeling a little scared, Jasper," Garrison says, sitting between his children on the front porch. "Telling the truth is a scary thing sometimes. It scared President Kennedy and he was a brave man. But if you let yourself be too scared, then you let the bad guys take over the country, don't you?" Kids: "Yeah." Costner/Garrison: "Then everybody gets scared." Which is *JFK*'s central insight.

What the video screen gives you is room to think, and thought is what a Stone film can least afford and tries most to avoid. It's like turning out the light in a shadow-puppet play. For the premise of his films is false. Not just historically false—*JFK*'s sanctification of Kennedy, *Nixon*'s cabal of right-wing Texas millionaires—but false in their worldview. Violence is not realer than civilization, and what lies beneath the surface is both more complicated and more *truly* exciting than Chris Taylor's destructive urges in *Platoon*, or the grand web of conspiracy in *JFK*, or the prophecy sung by Leonard Cohen as the credits roll at the end of *Natural Born Killers*: "Get ready for the future/It is murder." The James Woods character in *Salvador*—mendacious, shifty, self-serving, sympathetic, morally outraged, sometimes within a single scene, almost a single line—is, in an exaggerated way, uncomfortably reminiscent of you and me. And there's no place for him in Stone's other films. He would be turned into a truth-teller or made to stand for the corruption of American journalism or simply lost in the blur of rapid cuts and hand-held camera jostling.

"No one's innocent," Stone told his *New Yorker* profiler, by way of comment on the week-old Simpson case. "The line between thinking murder and doing murder isn't that major. Isn't that the point of *Natural Born Killers*, in a way?" It's at least the point of a director who knows that muck—a firefight in the jungle or a Wall Street wheeler-dealer or the last seconds of the Zapruder film or Jim Morrison's peyote quests or young bloodlust—sells more tickets than the ordinary struggle to be good, and that the image will always overpower the word. Amid the technical wizardry and visions of excess, goodness comes to seem ridiculous. Stone sets out to immerse us in the destructive element, then leaves us down there so long that by the time we resurface to hear Martin Sheen, as the hard-working union man in *Wall Street,* say, "The rich have been doing it to the poor since the beginning of time. The only difference between the pyramids and the Empire State Building is the Egyptians didn't allow unions," all we can do is laugh in his face. *Natural Born Killers* never lets you back up at all. Because there's no moral framework to invoke ("No one's innocent,"), what the movie purports to criticize it ends up glamorizing, which may help explain why a teenage couple from Mississippi went out and shot two people after watching it over and over.

In fact, the line between thinking murder and doing murder is everything—and a more interesting subject than homicidal rampage. But it's also the kind of subject that's beyond Stone's reach. As he's come to depend so heavily on visual effect, the moral and emotional shadings of a John Sayles film—disappointment, restraint, compromise, redemption—are impossible for Stone. This is why a news report several years ago that he had bought the rights to *Homage to Catalonia* seemed so disastrous. One

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pictured Orwell/Charlie Sheen on a train leaving strife-torn Barcelona, where an evil Communist (Tom Berenger) and a good anarchist (Willem Dafoe) have just blown each other away on the Ramblas, and saying in voice over, "I think now looking back that we did not fight the enemy. We fought ourselves and the enemy was in us." Or Orwell/Kevin Costner exhorting a group of P.O.U.M. militiamen in a trench on the Aragon front: "You all gotta start thinking on a different level, like the CP does. Now we're through the looking glass here, people. White is black and black is white." And back in London, sharing a Hyde Park bench with a carefully disguised Trotsky/Donald Sutherland. Orwell: "I never knew you were such a threat to the establishment. I can't believe they'd kill you because you want to change things." Trotsky: "Remember, fundamentally people are suckers for the truth, and the truth is on your side, Bubba. I just hope you get a break."

(*Homage to Catalonia*, or *Militia*, never appeared. Recently, though, the family of Martin Luther King and Time Warner entered a joint venture to commercialize King's life and work. Warner Bros. is Stone's studio. The King family's weakness for conspiracy theories might suggest to the conspiracy-minded a synergistic tie-in with the as-yet-unmade Oliver Stone film *MLK*.)

In Stone's climate of madness there's no room for human relationships—they are always static, and his women have no life on the screen except in the case of a strong performance, such as Joan Allen's as Pat Nixon. Nor is there room for real politics, which is to say, moral and historical complexity. *Nixon* (1995) tried and maybe for that reason suffered from longueurs. This famously political filmmaker has little to say about the really important political matters. On inequality we get *Wall Street*, on bigotry *Talk Radio*. Stone brings the shallowest instincts from the sixties—paranoia, grandiosity, romantic primitivism—to the skillful manipulation of images and celebrity culture of our own decade. His audience is at once seduced by technical dazzle, served tempting portions of corruption, and flattered by getting to identify with a moral hero at the center of an historic drama. "They" go about their dirty work while "we" seek the truth—unless, as in *Natural Born Killers*, "they" and "we" are equally guilty.

In either case, nothing much is asked of us. As the celluloid spell wears off and thought resumes and the op-ed pages turn to other topics, it's hard to remember what the commotion was about. A year or two later Stone releases another film, and the lines are long, and I'm standing in one of them. That his career has been so loud, and John Sayles's so comparatively quiet, shows the power of the electronic image, the attraction of glamorous muck over common decency, and the difficulty of saying something serious about politics through the vehicle of mass culture, which seems the only way left to be heard. □

Cynthia Fuchs Epstein

SUGAR-COATED SEXISM: A GIRLS' SCHOOL IN HARLEM

An odd coalition of women's rights advocates and anti-feminists are marketing a new kind of sexism. It was first sighted at the Virginia Military Institute and Citadel cases, in which some feminists and Old South traditionalists claimed that girls and young women have a different way of learning than do boys and men. They asserted that women need to have their self-esteem built up, while men need to have theirs knocked down. In New York City, this sexist thinking was embodied first in plans for an all-male public school in Harlem that never got off the drawing board and transmuted to a new institution, the East Harlem Young Women's Leadership School. This public school, which has benefited from private money—much of it raised by philanthropist Ann Rubenstein Tisch—and the backing of the conservative educational think tank the Manhattan Institute for Educational Innovation, boasts small classes held in an environment complete with oriental carpets on the floors, tea, croissants, and photos of every girl supplied by Donald Trump's personal photographer. There are many applicants for the school's fifty-five slots, and poor parents have

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been more than willing to sacrifice to find funds for the school uniform.

This elegant sheep's clothing surrounds a not so beneficent wolf. True, the words sound good and the place looks good—a school in which girls from a mixture of class and race backgrounds can learn in a positive environment, free from the undisciplined outbursts of arrogant and aggressive young men. Many representatives of the Harlem community—African- and Hispanic-Americans—are happy to have this bright spot in their midst, an alternative to old ramshackle buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and unruly students. Against charges that the school discriminates against males, school administrators say that boys could apply, but of course, none have.

It's hard to be against something that looks so good, and accounts of the school, in the *New York Times* and the *New York Observer*, for example, have been glowing. The school is clearly better than the norm and in fact offers the small class size and nurturing environment that progressive educators believe are of benefit to all children. However, it is the same-sex angle that has captured media attention, leading many commentators to call for sex-segregated classrooms as a solution to the problems that young girls encounter in achieving leadership (however it is defined) and excellence in math and the sciences.

What's wrong with all this? The school's supporters fail to see that boys are not the problem. Yes, studies show that teachers favor boys. But instead of altering the structure of coed schools, introducing effective discipline, personal attention, and small classes, and building community support, young women are given a new purdah.

There is much more wrong as well—above all, the incorrect reading of research that claims that women educated in single-sex institutions are more successful than those educated in coed settings. One oft-cited study, based on listings in *Who's Who of American Women*, a publication with much lower standards than *Who's Who in America*, did not control for the selectivity of schools or for the class position of the women who attended; and the data reflected practices at least ten and often twenty years old.

The major obstacles that women confront these days don't come from diminished self-esteem but from continuing stereotypes suggesting that they have different learning and performance styles. Once they move into the workplace, these stereotypes continue to justify subtle forms of discrimination, inadequate child care provision, and inflexible work schedules.

The East Harlem school puts girls in the front of the bus, but segregation, however it is sugar-coated, is against the law and morally wrong. It won't help girls (or boys) make their way in an integrated world. Better to learn together and work together from an early age, with the support of sympathetic teachers, than to reinforce the notions all too prevalent in society today that men are from Mars and women are from Venus and never their orbits shall meet. □

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Richard Rorty

WHEN WORK DISAPPEARS

WHEN WORK DISAPPEARS: THE WORLD OF THE NEW URBAN POOR, by William Julius Wilson. Knopf, 1996. 352 pp. $26.00.

Some years back Russell Jacoby introduced the term "public intellectual." He used it to mean the sort of nonacademic, politically concerned, widely read freelance who was typified, in the 1940s, by Dwight Macdonald. Jacoby titled his book *The Last Intellectuals*. He viewed with alarm the fact that almost all American intellectuals are now on college and university faculties.

Most of us professors who read Jacoby's book felt vaguely guilty. But I am not sure we should have. I do not think that Jacoby gave any convincing reasons to think that the economic security we enjoy has diminished our social utility. My father was the sort of old-time nonacademic freelance whom Jacoby praised. Although I honor his memory, it seems to me that lots of my fellow professors are doing much the same sort of thing that he did: writing for middlebrow journals about current social problems, explaining what the strong are currently doing to the weak, reflecting on possible scenarios for the country's future.

Jacoby did, however, have one good point: academization often produces introverted hyperprofessionalism. When the social sciences first became entrenched in the American system of higher education, it was thought that people in those disciplines would become the paradigmatic public intellectuals. They would help the cause of economic justice and social equality by providing the facts and figures needed to get the public to support reforms. But sociology, economics, and political science turned inward. Professors in these fields began to write for each other rather than for the public. They preferred to make contributions to knowledge, rather than to suggest ways to make American life better. They drew a sharp line between science and politics.

There were always exceptions: David Riesman and John Kenneth Galbraith are obvious examples. But, for better or worse, the humanities—and in particular the English departments—have gradually usurped the function that the social science departments were supposed to fulfill; they are now the principal academic support system for leftist political initiatives. The social (a.k.a. "behavioral") sciences have acquired a reputation for self-righteous sterility. In particular, the irrelevance of much of sociological research to public policy provides ammunition for Jacoby-like polemics.

But William Julius Wilson, a sociologist, is as socially useful and as politically relevant as any American academic has ever been. Thanks to him, the rest of us professors can stand a little taller. He is fulfilling the function of the public intellectual better than any of us in the humanities. His new book is a paradigm of what the founders of American social science had in mind. It is a highly readable, deeply informed, well-written argument for specific changes in public policy. John Dewey would have thought it a splendid example of applied intelligence.

Wilson's book contains all the statistics, all the survey reports, and all the references to the scholarly literature that the prissiest academic review committee could ask for. But its motive is straightforwardly practical: to figure out why millions of American children are leading utterly miserable lives in the ghettos, and what can be done about it. Its audience is all of us, in our capacity as fellow citizens of those children.

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If the founders of the University of Chicago sociology department (where Wilson taught for many years, before to going to Harvard) peer down from heaven and read *When Work Disappears*, they will rejoice that they did not build in vain.

Most of the empirical research Wilson and his group did is summarized in Part I of his book: "The New Urban Poverty." Reading these pages gives you an excellent idea of exactly how hard it is to get a job if you are a black graduate of an inner-city public high school. In the first place, the jobs (especially those that pay more than the minimum wage) are usually far away from your part of the city. There isn't any public transportation that will get you there in under two hours. Unlike the recently arrived immigrants with whom you are competing for jobs, you are not likely to have access to a family car pool. Further, your high school education did not equip you to speak in the way employers—even black employers—prefer, or to do the elementary math that the job requires. So you will be, as your ancestors were, the last hired and the first fired. Even the latest immigrants from Latin America and Asia—people accustomed to being treated like dirt back in their home countries—are likely to get in ahead of you. Most of the people you know who aren't on welfare are criminals. If you are still looking for an honest job, they regard you as a chump, and you can see their point.

Many of the African-American employers whom Wilson and his students surveyed would prefer to hire almost anyone but inner-city blacks. The black CEO of an inner-city wholesale firm said about the inner-city employment pool:

> Anytime you put all like people together—and particularly if they're on a low level—you destroy them. . . . How you going to expect . . . one's going to stand up like a flower?
>
> *Interviewer*: So you understand the wariness of some employers?
>
> *Black CEO*: Sure.

Wilson shows you just why it is very difficult to come out of the ghettos with a stable character, self-respect, a clear head, and a conviction that America is a land of opportunity.

He also gives you plenty of statistics of the sort which the *New York Times* summed up last year by saying that "it will be virtually impossible to move hundreds of thousands of people from public assistance into full-time jobs over the next few years, as the new federal law overhauling welfare intends." The hundreds of people in Detroit and New York who line up whenever a McDonald's advertises for burger-flippers are symptomatic of the fact that there just aren't enough jobs, even lousy jobs, out there. For millions of Americans (only about half of them black), it's not work or go hungry. It's stay on welfare or eat out of dumpsters.

If you have been reading books that suggest that African-American ghetto-dwellers are dumber, less civilized, more violent, or lazier than the rest of us, this book will explain to you how they got that reputation. For Wilson makes clear why life in the ghetto unfits you for participation in American society, and would do so regardless of your genetic endowment or of anything else. He shows you, in detail, how the ghettos strip people of civilized traits in the same way that the concentration camps did.

Wilson is remarkably patient with the pundits who urge that black teenagers, growing up with no realistic hope of a decent life, should have more gumption, display more sense of individual responsibility, and stop blaming their circumstances. But by the end of his book you will have come to despise those pundits. One should despise them, for the same reasons one would despise a parent who gives his or her more nimble children every advantage, while moving the more awkward ones out to the garage and feeding them table scraps. When Wilson mildly notes that "The U.S. Congress has retreated from using public policy as an instrument with which to fight social inequality," one is tempted to paraphrase by saying that American suburbanites have tacitly decided to turn the ghetto children over to the crack dealers.

Endless sensible proposals have been put forward for helping these children. Almost none have been acted upon. While he was in the Senate, Bill Bradley kept introducing a bill for what he called "fifteen-month houses"—houses in which women in the sixth month of pregnancy

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could go and live until their babies were a year old. Bradley pointed out, year after year, how much money the country would save by giving these mothers and children decent food and medical care during those fifteen months. His bill never reached the floor. America was not in a mood, and still is not in a mood, to spend any money on losers—even if they are fourteen-year-old girls, or one-month-old babies.

Wilson, like E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (in his recent *The Schools We Need*), points out that the French *écoles maternelles* (which take in children at the age of three and provide a sort of super-Head Start Program) put the children of recent African immigrants to Paris way ahead of tenth-generation American kids growing up on the South Side of Chicago. Wilson would like to see the United States institute such schools, as well as a national system of performance standards for school work, a system that would force ghetto public schools to become something more than holding pens. Hirsch thinks that accomplishing that will require a national curriculum as well as performance standards, and I suspect he is right.

In the second part of his book, "The Social Policy Challenge," Wilson offers a battery of further suggestions about how we might stop creating generations of more and more wretched, desperate proto-criminals. Of these, the most comprehensive is his proposal that we revive the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA) and put people to work renewing the country's infrastructure: tearing down the miserable old school buildings and putting up new ones, rebuilding the overpasses and bridges, replanting the parks, repainting the museums, and so on. He estimates that doing so would take about $12 billion of tax money annually for every million jobs created. He might have added that every job created may well make possible a decent home for a couple of children (at only $6,000 per child per year).

A candidate who pledged himself to support such a new WPA would be likely to lose, because there probably are only two ways to raise the necessary money. One is to repudiate the idea that the United States must be ready to fight two Gulf-style wars at once, and that we must therefore keep right on giving 40 percent of the federal government's disposable income to the Defense Department. The other is to raise the tax rates on people making more than $50,000, thus bringing U.S. taxation more into line with the European system.

Neither proposal has much of a chance. The first will be defeated because the military-industrial complex will bribe Congress to keep its share of the taxpayers' money constant. The second will be defeated because of plain ordinary selfishness. Granted, this selfishness is as much a matter of concern with the future of middle-class children as of the desire for more beautiful cars and homes. But what kind of country is it that can live with the thought that nine-tenths of its children are scheduled to profit from the utter ruin of the other tenth? □

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Gerald Early

DECODING RALPH ELLISON

The curious, but essential, dimension of the Ralph Ellison literary myth is that he published only one novel, and that his entire authority as a writer and intellectual rests on this one work. The success of the book made Ellison not only the exemplary black creative writer but also an intellectual of some considerable standing. On one level, Ellison's career stopped with the 1952 publication of *Invisible Man*, because the rest of his life was a long effort to produce a second novel that never appeared and that, probably, was never even finished, though he scribbled endlessly. On another level, the novel's publication was only the start of his career, if one considers the career to be the position that Ellison was able to occupy as a result of the acclaim *Invisible Man* garnered. Was this career an engagement on the highest level of principle that a black artist heroically demanded of himself, his audience, and his society, or was it a kind of brilliant evasion, a failure of nerve that only a black artist could have experienced because of what he implausibly demanded of himself, a demand that in onerousness or pretension neither his audience nor society could lessen?

Even more than the reputation of his white contemporary J.D. Salinger rests on *The Catcher in the Rye*, Ellison's rests on *Invisible Man.* I do not make the connection casually, as *Invisible Man* and *The Catcher in the Rye* were published within a few years of each other and both seem to have derived from the same principal American source, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, the granddaddy novel about growing up male and absurd and being terribly miseducated by a hypocritical society. The two books also deal with similar philosophical issues: the fluidity of human life bumping up against human systems of categorization; ideologies as masks that humans adopt to manipulate or to delude; the individual finding freedom, not through politics, but through a kind of aesthetic and psychological "re-wiring." Holden Caulfield has a nervous breakdown and is being treated in a hospital after he could not escape or "light out for the territories"; the Invisible Man has literally re-wired his hole in the ground after having undergone his own breakdown during a race riot where he, too, found escape impossible. Since both novels are first-person books, it might be said that each narrator is cured through the psychoanalytic treatment of making his life into a tour-de-force work of art.

Ellison's novel seemingly brought black writing of age beyond mere protest and sociology, as black fiction had been seen by the white

BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY

Conversations with Ralph Ellison, edited by Maryemma Graham and Amrijit Singh. University Press of Mississippi, 1995. 409 pp. $15.95.

Flying Home and Other Stories, by Ralph Ellison, edited and with an introduction by John F.Callahan. Random House, 1996. 176 pp. $23.00.

Heroism and the Black Intellectual: Ralph Ellison, Politics, and Afro-American Intellectual Life, by Jerry Gafio Watts. The University of North Carolina Press, 1994. 156 pp. $29.95, cloth; $12.95, paper.

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literary establishment. "I wasn't, and am not, concerned with injustice but with art," Ellison said in 1954. This stance helped assure that he would be taken seriously by whites as a literary intellectual, as someone who could theorize or instruct about the function of the novel and the role of the black writer, because it was in such agreement with the general views of the major white critics of the day.

The early reviews of Ellison's novel, as Jerry Gafio Watts points out in his study of Ellison, were not wholly favorable; some thought the book poorly constructed, despite scenes of astonishing brilliance (a criticism that is not unjustified, as Ellison himself admitted that he found making transitions difficult). But Ellison won the 1953 National Book Award, and in 1965, in a poll of more than two hundred authors, critics, and editors, *Invisible Man* was voted the most distinguished work of fiction published since the end of World War II. Ellison had beaten out such white writers as Salinger, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Joseph Heller, Mary McCarthy, Harvey Swados, Jack Kerouac, Flannery O'Connor, William Burroughs, John Cheever, Truman Capote, Vladimir Nabokov, Bernard Malamud, Eudora Welty, and at least a dozen more, a stunning feat.

Unlike Salinger, who has published no other novels but has produced a few collections of shorter works, Ellison published no collections of his pre- or post-*Invisible Man* fiction in his lifetime, although he did publish fugitive pieces of fiction in magazines and journals both before and after his major novel. Thus, the appearance of *Flying Home and Other Stories* is, at least, of historical importance as it brings together most of Ellison's pre-*Invisible Man* fiction for the first time. But also unlike Salinger, Ellison kept himself in the intellectual and literary limelight by doing several dozen interviews over the years, many of which are included in *Conversations With Ralph Ellison*, a generous sampling of Ellison's elaborations on his artistic and political creed. (An interview he gave to a jazz magazine in 1976 is alone worth the price of the book. Ellison's conversation is often rich, indeed.) He also published two collections of essays: *Shadow and Act* (1964) and *Going to the Territory* (1986), which set forth his views as a literary critic and public intellectual. They have become seminal works in African-American intellectual history.

Ellison may have withdrawn from public politics or direct involvement in the civil rights movement, but he never withdrew from the public realm as a writerly presence. He insisted, until his death in 1994, that both blacks and whites take him on his own terms. This meant that he resisted the temptation to become a spokesman like James Baldwin (a wise move when one looks at what happened to Baldwin the writer as a result) and also resisted the quackery and opportunism of jealous black nationalist critics who condemned his novel as "not contributing to the liberation of black people," as I remember the cant phrase of the day. He is to be commended for this. But the larger issue here is that an oppressed minority like African-Americans cannot be expected to show much patience with intellectuals and writers who want to appear above the fray. It is easy for such a group, rightly and wrongly, to mistrust any prominent black who does not seem to be saying anything that bothers white people. After all, blacks knew they could never reward Ellison the way whites could and that, historically, is the core of the problem between blacks and their artistic elite. As members of my working-class family used to put it, "You work for who pays you." It is little wonder, in so lonely a position as Ellison occupied, that he crafted such a highly stylized public presence. It is that presence, self-consciously and thickly constructed, and sometimes enigmatic and even paradoxical, that Watts attempts to unpack in his book.

What the interviews make clear is that Ellison, although sticking to the same creed of dedication to the power of aesthetic experience, political detachment, the deified power of craft mastery, the humanely expressive capacities of folklore, and the need for a sharp individualism, was able, over the years, while saying the same things, to say them with a great deal of intellectual energy and even variety. Ellison's thought seemed to evolve even as he repeated himself; he approached the interview as if it were an art form. What he says is sometimes fasci-

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nating and revealing: "There is a kind of ideal reader and that ideal reader would be a Negro who was in full possession of all the subtleties of literature and art and politics [1965]." And what dovetails with this: "Too many books by Negro writers are addressed to a white audience [1954]." "As long as Negroes are confused as to how they relate to American culture, they will be confused about their relationship to places like Africa [1960]." "I find the assumption that no Negro can do anything unless another Negro has done so before him rather simple-minded, and as far as I'm concerned, it's an inverted form of racism [1977]."

The interviews reveal, among other matters, Ellison's constant concern to create a literary lineage that connects him to the canonized Western tradition, asserting his right as a black man to claim this heritage as much as anyone while decrying the idea that a black writer can, in truth, only represent a marginalized, racialized corner of literature. This is what lies behind his ambivalent treatment of Richard Wright, the major black literary figure before him, and a good friend as well, who is, as a model and enabler, both his entry point into Western literature and his entry point into marginalization. "[Wright] was constantly reading the great masters, just as he read the philosophers, the political theorists, the social and literary critics. He did not limit himself in the manner that many Negro writers currently limit themselves. And he encouraged other writers—who usually rebuffed him—to become conscious craftsmen, to plunge into the world of conscious literature and take their chances unafraid. . . . In 1940 he was well aware that *Native Son* was being published at a time when *The Grapes of Wrath* and *For Whom The Bell Tolls* would be his main competition. . . . He wished to be among the most advanced artists and was willing to run the risk required [1967]." "[Wright's] underestimation [of Ellison's intellectual background] did make for a certain irony in our relationship; because, sometimes, thanks to my own reading and quite different experience, I was in a position to have made suggestions for solving problems from which he might have benefited [1976]." "*Native Son* is a very powerful novel, but to my mind something is missing. . . . I say this not to put down my friend, but rather to point to something about the nature of the novel as humanist expression. In it we seek not status, not class, but a reflecting consciousness—certainly in the hero who confronts the complexities of his situation [1968]." Baldwin melodramatically and self-servingly made Wright into a father figure so that he might have someone ultimately to attack, in order, in part, to bolster himself in his early career; Ellison respectfully refuses to use Wright in quite that way.

Yet there is in Ellison's quarrel with Wright a sense that his stature is dependent on making clear that he is capable of doing something—did, in fact, achieve something with *Invisible Man* that Wright could not do in *Native Son* and *Black Boy*. As Ellison makes clear in a 1954 interview, "I recognize no dichotomy between art and protest." He suggests that critics would better identify the weakness in black literature not by complaining about protest but "about [black writers'] lack of craftsmanship and their provincialism." Clearly, what is implicit in Ellison's view—since his problem with Wright is not that Wright saw art essentially as a form of protest or that Wright was "afraid to leave the uneasy sanctuary of race," as Ellison writes elsewhere, "to take [his] chances in the world of art"—is that Wright simply did not write novels well. Watts's book accounts for the difference in writerly perspectives between the two men well enough; yet it seems to me that Watts misses a very important point because he accepts Ellison's (and generally the standard, until very recently) judgment about the literary worth of Wright's work. (Once Ellison's reputation was firmly established there was always the tendency to relate Ellison to Wright in much the way Lionel Trilling related Henry James—who could write but didn't care about politics—to Theodore Dreiser—who couldn't write but who cared about politics.)

There are two important considerations for us here. *Invisible Man* really does not supersede *Native Son* as a novel if one considers what both novels wind up saying: despite all of his hero's access to black folklore and the like, the Invisible Man winds up in the end like Wright's Bigger Thomas, isolated from the black com-

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munity, indeed, from human community entirely. Both novels show that black community is an impossible idea, precisely the point that Wright was trying to make in his argument with Zora Neale Hurston, who believed, like Ellison, that the aesthetics of folklore would invent or invoke community. Black community or a broad black humanity is impossible because the reality of white racist politics won't permit it, according to Wright. This is why Ellison's complaint that "[Bigger] doesn't possess the culture of Chicago Negroes of his background of that period" would have sounded silly to Wright; Wright's point is that that culture could not have saved his character from his self-destructive rage.

Moreover, Ellison, no less than Wright, rejects the black church as a vehicle for expression, which means both rejected the central *communal* institution in black life. Oddly, one finds more about black religion in the work of Wright the Marxist than in Ellison the folklorist. Both Ellison and Wright, staunch individualists, are wary of the harshness of conformity and anti-intellectualism in black life. Ellison writes in his essay "Richard Wright's Blues" that what is unusual about Wright is that he "made no peace with [the black community's] essential cruelty," although he so clearly recognized it. But Ellison fails to understand that Wright also refuses to make peace with the forces that he feels have dehumanized him and that have made it impossible for a true black humanity to express itself on anything like its own terms. This is why Wright prizes rebellion. As a final assessment, Watts is right in saying "Both writers conveyed limited perspectives of black life." But neither writer, and here critics make the common mistake of favoring Ellison, is more successfully modernist than the other. Besides, it must be remembered that Wright was able to do something as a novelist, something of significance, that Ellison was never able to do—publish more than one in his lifetime and not to be paralyzed by his masterpiece, *Native Son*, as Ellison apparently was by *Invisible Man*.

One of the weaknesses of Watts's book is his lack of deep reading of literary works. I believe the book would have been greatly strengthened had he analyzed *Invisible Man* for its philosophical, political, and cultural ideas. They are far more systematized, far more visualized in the novel, and, thus, far more complete, than in Ellison's essays. I am aware that Watts is not a literary critic, although he seems enormously well read in intellectual history. However, once he decided to read out African American intellectual life using a literary figure, not a social scientist, the task demanded that he deal more directly with literature than he did.

This weakness aside, there is much to admire in Watts's work. I think that Watts quite accurately describes the limitations of Ellison's attempt to disguise an elite view of culture with a great deal of talk about folklore, of Ellison's inflated claims about the influence blacks have exerted on whites, of his over-investment in a "blues" ontology that would ultimately free blacks from the prison of sociology and from being the sum total of their social pathologies, and of Ellison's belief in heroic individualism or a kind of exceptionalism as the standard for the group. I am glad that Watts does not belabor his points (his book is mercifully short in this age of the academic tome, and highly readable) but I think that a closing chapter on Ellison's two closest disciples, Stanley Crouch and Albert Murray, and how they have dealt with or failed to deal with Ellison's contradictions, would have been very enriching and intriguing. I find Crouch especially stimulating in this regard as he has not, unlike Murray, published any novels. Thus, Crouch's entire reputation has been built on his criticism and, unlike Ellison, he has not shied away from politics. In defending the Ellison creed, he has been tied, rightly or wrongly, to the ideological tin can of neoconservatism. Whether Crouch's ingenuity as a critic will permit him not to be boxed in by this or whether the Ellison creed, carried to its end, is simply another call for the aesthetic and moral strictures of modernism, remains to be seen. The biggest problem for black intellectuals calling for modernism is that they are confounded by their own implicit need for relativism—the need to assert that blacks have had an influence on the United States, and thus the West, of the same magnitude as that of every-

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one else who lays claims to the Western heritage. The relativism is, of course, contrary to modernism itself. Ellison, by necessity, was a relativist, as Watts astutely points out, which made him an oddball modernist. Interestingly, Wright never was a relativist and never claimed that black cultural life was equal in richness and possibilities to white life in America.

With the exception of "A Coupla Scalped Indians," all the stories in *Flying Home and Other Stories* were written before *Invisible Man*, from the late 1930s to the middle 1940s, and therein lies the problem in assessing these works. The tendency is not to see the works in their own right, according to their strengths and weaknesses as short fiction. Rather, one is inclined to see them as adumbrations of *Invisible Man*. The more successful the story, the better it serves as a kind of prefiguration of the novel. This is the problem when one book absorbs a writer's career and justifies his or her claim to attention. The less fair question, naturally, is whether this collection would have been published at all had some unknown writer put it together. That is to say, are the stories worthy of our attention apart from the person who wrote them? This is not easy to answer. The problem is that these are obviously apprentice works, the equivalent of artbook sketches, practice-room exercises. Isn't the entire premise of this collection the idea that they suggest a culmination, an arrival in *Invisible Man*?

The old man who tells of his dream of flying around heaven in "Flying Home" obviously is a prototype of *Invisible Man*'s Trueblood. Aunt Kate in "That I Had the Wings" suggests Mary Rambo. The narrator, Mr. Parker, with his one punched-in, throbbing eye and his creed about America, will become the narrator in *Invisible Man*, as will the pilot in "Flying Home." One can go on in this way, but it would not address the issue of the true significance of these stories. What is of more moment here is how much in these stories Ellison struggled to find his own voice.

I highly recommend *Conversations with Ralph Ellison*. Watts's *Heroism and the Black Intellectual* is a thoughtful if not always persuasive book, certainly a good beginning for a more intensive and extensive engagement with Ellison and his disciples. It is worth reading. *Flying Home* is of mild interest for readers interested in Ellison. His essential work remains *Invisible Man* and the essay collections. □

Jeff Sklansky

THE SCIENCE OF INTEGRATION

CHILDREN, RACE, AND POWER: KENNETH AND MAMIE CLARK'S NORTHSIDE CENTER, by Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner. University Press of Virginia, 1996. 304 pp. $29.95.

A century ago this year, W.E.B. Du Bois took charge of a new series of annual conferences at Atlanta University on the state of Black America. Having just completed *The Philadelphia Negro*, a pioneering sociological survey of Philadelphia's largely black seventh ward, Du Bois mapped out an ongoing program of scientific studies of various aspects of black life throughout the nation. His long-range plan was for the studies to be repeated in ten-year cycles for the next hundred years, expanding in scope each decade. "The Negro problem called for systematic investigation and intelligence," Du Bois said at an Atlanta University convocation in

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1938. "If I could have carried it out as completely as I conceived it, the American negro would have contributed to the development of social science in this century an unforgettable body of work."

By the end of the first decade of Atlanta Conferences, his hopes for the scientific settlement of "the Negro problem" had dimmed, as Jim Crow and Judge Lynch appeared unmoved by the evidence of inequality. In 1910, Du Bois resigned his academic post to help lead the newly formed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). But his early research formed the starting point of what has become indeed "an unforgettable body of work" by American social scientists, black and white, on African-American life. The "Negro problem"—that is, the problem of racial inequality—has been the central concern of much of American social science throughout the twentieth century. Du Bois's successors generally have defined that problem much as he did in *The Souls of Black Folk*, in terms that evoked the romantic psychology of his friend William James. On the deepest level, Du Bois wrote, the problem was a struggle for "self-consciousness" amid pervasive prejudice:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.

Du Bois later came to describe the problem differently, as he moved from his early faith in sociology and psychology toward the commitment to class struggle that ultimately led him into the Communist party. But the psychic split that he described as "twoness" became, for many social scientists, the essential dilemma of American race relations.

The decisive demonstration that racial inequality gave rise to a profound psychological struggle within black Americans came in the child studies conducted in the late 1930s by Kenneth and Mamie Clark. The first black students to enter Columbia University's graduate program in psychology, the Clarks went on to study the formation of racial identity, most famously by asking black children to choose between white dolls and black dolls. They found that most of their three- to seven-year-old subjects preferred the white dolls to those of their own race. The Clarks' conclusion, that black children developed a "negative self-image" at the same early age that they acquired a sense of racial identity, provided the critical scientific support for the NAACP's case against segregation in public education in the early 1950s. Their evidence of the psychological toll taken by segregation bolstered the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that separate schools were "inherently unequal," regardless of the relative resources available to white and black schools. The Clarks' studies formed a crucial link between the sense of racial alienation that Du Bois described and the theory of psychosocial "damage" due to past or present racism, an idea that gained considerable currency in postwar American social science.

Their research also inspired the Clarks to establish in Harlem in 1946 what became the Northside Center for Child Development, dedicated to preventing or ameliorating the psychological wounds inflicted upon children by segregation and discrimination. As Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner show in their compelling institutional biography, *Children, Race, and Power*, Northside provided a much-needed alternative to New York City's draconian child welfare system, in an era when Harlem was straining to accommodate a massive influx of African-Americans for whom private charity and foster care were largely off-limits. "Our biggest job is to build a child's self-esteem," Kenneth Clark told *Ebony* magazine, "so that he can bear life in spite of slums, lack of privacy, discrimination and ugliness all around him." At the same time, Northside's founders sought to combat the destructive forces that eroded children's self-esteem—both clinically, by offering remedial education and family counseling, and politically, by mobilizing the community on behalf of integration and civil rights. Over the next thirty years,

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the Clarks' center became a leading outpost of racial liberalism in one of the nation's largest predominantly black communities.

In the early 1960s, Northside took a central role in the planning stage of Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU), one of the showpiece federally funded, community-organized programs of the War on Poverty. Kenneth Clark's *Dark Ghetto* (1965), which grew out of the initial HARYOU study conducted under his guidance, helped to shape public policy and discussion regarding antipoverty and community action programs. A fitting successor to Du Bois's *Philadelphia Negro*, Clark's work was the product of a team of government-sponsored researchers rather than a lone university instructor on a threadbare budget, and it brought modern psychology to bear on its subject in bold new ways to reveal the "distortion of personality" and the "impairment of psychological effectiveness" wrought by ghetto life. Later in the decade, under Mamie Clark's forceful direction, Northside further expanded its mission to include "community education, community action and advocacy," joining in the heightened militance of the Northern civil rights movement. But the center never reneged on its promise to provide the children of Harlem with first-rate psychological services.

Recently, Northside commissioned Markowitz and Rosner, who have published several previous works on twentieth-century American social history together, to write its own history. They have done so with compassion and care. Their insightful new book is an invaluable addition to the burgeoning literature on the significance of social science in American political culture since World War II, and particularly in the civil rights movement and the Great Society. It is also a sharp argument for the moral force of Northside's scientific spirit, which the authors rightly contrast to the resurgent racism of current social-scientific apologies for cutbacks in welfare and public education.

But therein lies a problem that neither the Clarks nor Markowitz and Rosner directly address. Does the ease with which the social science of race relations has been turned to reactionary ends call into question the soundness of modern social science as a basis for progressive politics? Does the equal ease with which conservatives and neoliberals have dismantled the infrastructure of integration call for a rethinking of its psychosocial rationale? Part of the answer may be found by carefully considering the story Markowitz and Rosner tell of Northside in the years since 1968, the turning point for much of the liberal political economy of the postwar era.

That year, Northside threw itself into the searing battle against the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the New York City teachers' union, over community control of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district. The partisans of community control, strengthened by the Clarks' efforts to help organize a "Union of Concerned Parents," nominally won that fight. But they did so at the cost of busting a fifty-five-day citywide strike by the teachers' union and thereby providing an ominous demonstration of the precarious position of organized labor, a pillar of the postwar liberal order. The UFT's estrangement from those in the black community justifiably demanding control over their schools was itself a sign of the union's departure from the broad social agenda that had made it an early ally of the civil rights movement. But given the narrow constraints of collective bargaining, the UFT could hardly do other than guard the fragile authority embodied in its pathbreaking contract for public workers. Nor could it help but see the community control plan underway in 1968 as an assault upon everything it had won in six years of struggle.

Two years later, Northside once again ran up against an essential claim of organized labor in the era of collective bargaining, this time within Northside's own ranks. Local 1199, a union of predominantly black and Latino health care workers with a strong history of support for civil rights, sought to organize the Northside staff. But Kenneth and Mamie Clark adamantly, and successfully, opposed the local's most fundamental demand: the union shop. Their identification of the union shop as a threat to Northside's very existence stemmed from two of the basic commitments upon which the child development center was founded: first, a commitment to the strong family as a microcosm

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and model of healthy social relations; and second, a commitment to professional, social-scientific expertise as the source of such familial strength and social health. What Markowitz and Rosner aptly call "the union challenge to the Northside family" threatened not only the founders' vision of Northside itself as a family, but also their professional authority as social scientists. "The typically adversarial relationship of union to management was antithetical to [Northside's] style and its sense of its mission," the authors write.

At the risk of slighting Northside's distinguished history of enlightened activism and community service, I am focusing on these two episodes because they highlight what seems to me a serious problem for the American left, then and now: the tension between a humanitarian idealism informed by social psychology and an understanding of advanced capitalism indebted to an older tradition of political economy. It would be simplistic to see the child development center and the labor union as rival bases of social action, the one guided by social psychology and the other by political economy. For one thing, the Clarks often insisted that political and economic inequality was responsible for the psychological problems they treated at Northside. For another thing, they understood all too well that mental health requires money, and that money rarely comes without strings. The Clarks' never-ending fight for funding, and their persistent unwillingness to yield control of Northside to their financial benefactors, runs throughout Markowitz and Rosner's work.

But it seems fair to say that the conflict between Northside's commitment to familial relations and social-scientific expertise, on the one hand, and organized labor's commitment to collective bargaining and the union shop, on the other, reflected competing conceptions of social power. As organized labor shows signs of becoming again a wide-reaching social movement, while so much of the liberal politics of the postwar period appears to have run its course, it may be time to critically reconsider those strains in the American left-liberal tradition that have run counter to a labor-based politics. Social psychology, Northside's stock-in-trade, is one such strain.

Northside's conception of social power derived from a mixture of Weberian sociology and behavioristic psychology, as Kenneth Clark explained in his 1965 address to the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, elaborating what he called "a social psychological theory of power." Deeply influenced by the psychodynamic theory of Alfred Adler, Clark conceived of social power as an outgrowth of a psychological struggle, namely the universal human "striving for power . . . rooted in basic feelings of inferiority." The key contribution of the Clarks' early research was to show how such feelings were given special force by racism and segregation. In the segregated city that Kenneth Clark depicted in *Dark Ghetto*, the unsuccessful striving for power gave rise to the "social pathology"—illegitimacy, delinquency, drug addiction, and related concerns—that would become a staple of psychosocial studies of poor, black, urban America.

Equally importantly, Clark maintained that segregation was both the cause and the consequence of a similar psychic struggle, a similar sense of "twoness," on the opposite side of the racial divide. Joining in the social psychology of prejudice developed by mid-century writers including Gordon Allport, Theodor Adorno, Bruno Bettelheim, and Gunnar Myrdal, Clark described what he called the "pathos of power" in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1971. "The pathetic vulnerability of the human ego may be illustrated by the insight that the most ruthless, power-competitive individual may be driven by an insatiable need to be loved and accepted by others," Clark said. "Nowhere can such an individual obtain enough actual power to disguise from himself the essential fact—the intolerable fact—of his own essential inner powerlessness." This "inner powerlessness" lay at the core of both white racism and such pathological repercussions as Black Power (in its most "extreme" form), in Clark's view. The antidote lay in the cultivation of healthy self-esteem as well as a proper esteem for others, which was Northside's ultimate aim from the start. It was the object as well of Clark's regrettable proposal, in his 1971 address, for the development of a biochemical "psychotechnology" that would

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eradicate crime, brutality, and abuse of authority—a cure, in other words, for the pathology as well as the pathos of power.

Clark's long-standing "diagnosis," as he put it, deserves more critical attention than this last-ditch "remedy." His earlier description in *Dark Ghetto* of what he called "the ghetto inside" offered a revealing gloss on Du Bois's "Negro problem":

> The great tragedy—but possibly the great salvation too—of the Negro and white in America is that neither one can be free of the other. Each Negro is a little bit white, and every white is a little bit Negro, in the sense that neither is totally alien from the other. Both are caught in a common human predicament. Each needs the other, the white to be free of his guilt, the Negro to be free of his fear; guilt and fear are both self-destructive.

White and black America were united by mutual need on the common ground of the pathetic psyche that Clark envisioned. Engaged in a common struggle against self-destruction, they were bound by the "inner powerlessness" that compelled each to look to the other for selfhood and strength, much as the children in the Clarks' early studies learned to see themselves as others saw them.

Children were the appropriate subjects of the Clarks' science of social life. For the social psychology of integration was fundamentally a science of common needs rather than competing interests, of powerlessness rather than power. Such a science could scarcely describe the social structure that divided Americans, or that united them on unequal terms. For Kenneth Clark, the "problem of personal and social power" was essentially a "problem of human motivation." If the struggle against racism and poverty had fallen short, the reason was to be found in a sobering psychological truth: "Those human beings with power," in his words, "are deeply unwilling to share even a modicum of real power with those who have been powerless." That observation was borne out several years later when the New York City fiscal crisis (along with the Nixon Administration's ceasefire in the War on Poverty) resulted in drastic reductions in the government funding upon which Northside had come to depend. Northside was forced to retreat in large part from the expansive social work it had initiated in the 1960s and to return to its original mission, providing mental health services to a deplorably underserved community.

The downsizing of Northside was a harbinger of the coming destruction of much of the institutional foundation of integration, from the green flight of urban businesses to the defunding of public schools to the closing of mass transit systems. Rising anew from the rubble, the social psychology of racial inequality has taken twisted new forms. In an appalling irony, the "tangle of pathology" has become a standard means of mystifying political subjugation and economic exploitation. From the perspective of political economy, the urban fiscal crisis of the mid-1970s was the final stretch of the marathon of state-sponsored capital accumulation that had created the dark ghetto as well as the bright suburb. It was effectively a successful strike by finance capital, which thereby consolidated its control over city government and inaugurated the current era of fiscal austerity. The main targets of that assault were aggressive metropolitan unions like the UFT and Local 1199, which had been the strongest forces behind full employment, high wages, and a growing public sector, the economic underpinnings of civil rights and the Great Society. Labor's loss was thus Northside's as well.

From the perspective of social psychology, the demise of much of the integrationist project is difficult to explain, and even harder to resist. It is vital to recall the power and humanity of that project. It is no less essential to appreciate that the psychological and educational assistance that Northside has provided for half a century is in itself a monumental achievement. But it is also worth wondering whether Northside's broader psychosocial vision of politics and power has proven inadequate, and even enfeebling in important ways. And it is worth considering whether the structure of political and economic power in modern America demands a different sort of oppositional politics, focused less upon the socialization of the psyche and more upon the socialization of property. □

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Abraham Brumberg

LAYING SIEGE TO LUBIANKA

ARRESTED VOICES: RESURRECTING THE DISAPPEARED WRITERS OF THE SOVIET REGIME, by Vitaly Shentalinsky. Translated by John Crowfoot. Martin Kessler Books, The Free Press, 1996. 322 pp. $25.00.

Vitaly Shentalinsky is a Russian poet, journalist, and historian, now in his early fifties. During the Soviet period, like so many people of his generation, he became an avid reader of *samizdat*, or underground, literature. What gripped him most were writings by and about once-famous Soviet writers who had been cast into limbo.

It was a gruesome story. Thousands of writers, many of them ardent supporters of the revolution, had found themselves hounded, excoriated in the press, and forced to criticize or disavow their own writings at debasing meetings staged in front of "fellow writers or indignant workers and peasants." Some were arrested and never heard from again. Others were executed on the spot. Their writings vanished from public libraries and bookstores; references to their works were excised from textbooks and encyclopedias.

A dozen or so years after the emergence of *samizdat*, Shentalinsky was buoyed by the coming of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. More and more writers began to be "rehabilitated," their works brought back into print. Pugnacious journals such as *Ogonyok* (*Little Flame*), once a bastion of stultifying rectitude, published revelatory articles. It became possible—in time even fashionable—to speak openly of Stalinist repression. And so Shentalinsky and a few of his colleagues embarked on a project designed to clear the names of the murdered writers and bring out their suppressed works. This was not to be pursued, as it had been since Khrushchev's thaw, in piecemeal fashion, subject to the whim of this or that bureaucrat. Only by storming the holy of holies, the vaults of the KGB in Lubianka, Moscow, could full justice to the dead writers and to Russian literature be done.

This meant that all the pertinent papers were to be obtained, scrutinized, and presented to the public, including the records of the arrests, interrogations, and trials. (That the documents had not in the main been destroyed seems to be characteristic of totalitarian bureaucracies: order and punctiliousness were the hallmarks of the Nazi hell as well. The lists of those executed by Nazi killing staffs are still being examined today.)

In some cases, as it turned out, the records seemed to have been tampered with and important evidence suppressed: this, too, had to be spelled out in the final reports. It is not surprising, therefore, that even after the project was approved by both the KGB and the party, Shentalinsky and the other members of the "Commission for the Literary Heritage of Repressed and Deceased Writers," as it was named, would run into obstructions, evasions, and often outright refusals to meet their demands for information.

Shentalinsky's project was extremely unwelcome to most of the old party *apparatchiki*, as well as to literary hacks who craved the sanctuary of approved dogmas and whose taste for "socialist realism" had been richly rewarded by the state. Together these two groups mounted a rearguard offensive against the "liberals." All the disclosures about past crimes, they argued, were a sham, and the liberals' attacks on the authorities threatened the very pillars of the "socialist state." The terror machinery was gone, but the language of its one-time partisans was all too familiar.

The chief editor of the supernationalistic lit-

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erary journal *Nash sovremennik*, Stanislav Kunaev, demanded to be included in Shentalinsky's commission. Once included, he did his best to place obstacles in the commission's path.

Kunaev and others like him were formidable enemies, with considerable support within the highest echelons of the party apparat. Nonetheless, Shentalinsky and his colleagues did not retreat. And so, in time, the vaults of the KGB were cracked, their contents hauled out into the open.

The result is *Arrested Voices*, a book that examines the cases of the most famous literary victims of Stalin—people like Isaac Babel, Pavel Florensky, Boris Pilnyak, Osip Mandelstam, the Yiddish actor Solomon Mikhoels, the theater director Vsevolod Meyerhold, and the journalist Mikhail Koltsov. The book also discusses the fates of writers who were not arrested, but who were pursued, hounded, and harassed. Chief among them is the novelist and playwright Mikhail Bulgakov, author of *The Master and Margarita*, written between 1928 and 1940, but published in its entirety only in 1973. Stalin seemed to respect Bulgakov, while subjecting him to savage cat-and-mouse games, now promising to let him travel abroad, now withdrawing his promise, encouraging him to think his plays would be staged, only to make it clear that the "encouragement" was but a cruel hoax.

Yet another person in whom the secret police took an extraordinary interest was Maxim Gorky, a man whose chameleon-like qualities, fondness for *la dolce vita*, and vanity proved valuable both to Lenin and to Stalin. For a time, Gorky supported Lenin, then he distanced himself from him, and later again became his follower. Similarly, for a time Gorky turned against Stalin. Living for many years in comfort on the Isle of Capri (with Mussolini's tacit agreement), he finally let himself be wooed back to the Soviet Union, where Stalin rewarded him with two country villas and a spacious apartment in Moscow. In the 1920s, Gorky frequently came to the aid of writers arbitrarily arrested or hounded by the police. Once he became in effect an apologist for Stalin, he ignored the plight of his fellow writers. Stalin exploited his reputation to launch the official dogma of "socialist realism" in 1934, and in the third of the three large "Moscow Trials" in 1938, accused the former head of the OGPU*, Genrikh Yagoda, of causing the death of Gorky (and others), for which naturally no evidence was produced. Yagoda was duly executed.

How many victims were claimed by Stalin's killing machine? When he first began his investigations, Shentalinsky believed that two thousand writers had been arrested after 1917 and that "a half thousand of them did not survive." He revised this figure later, though he offers no final total. How many were killed by execution squads alone, however, can be surmised from the volumes—four hundred in all—that were found in 1991, and that carried the names of thousands of people from all walks of life executed between 1921 and 1991, "page after page of surnames marked with a tick in red pencil, 'sentence carried out.' "

This grim statistic covers not only the Stalin period, but the whole history of the USSR. It would be useful to know how many of these executions took place under Lenin—or for that matter after Stalin's demise. The author does not tell us, but what he makes clear is that the methods applied against outright political prisoners were applied with equal ferocity against writers and intellectuals.

We are, by now, inured to stories of the horrors of Stalinist methods, but it comes with a particular shock to read how Isaac Babel, Boris Pilnyak, Nikolay Kluyev, and others were subjected to the "conveyer belt," almost uninterrupted interrogations going on for days and nights. They were whipped, beaten, and tortured into submission, forced to invent confessions of the most phantasmagorical crimes. Thus:

> I was made to lie face down and then beaten on the soles of my feet and my spine with a rubber strap. They sat me on a chair and beat my feet from above, with considerable force. . . . Lying face down on the floor, I discovered that I could

*Unified State Political Directorate, later the NKVD or internal security police.

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> wriggle, twist and squeal like a dog when its master whips it . . . .

(This comes from a letter sent by Meyerhold to Molotov, which the latter—need I point out?—ignored.)

Reading the bogus confessions of the OGPU's victims (Babel: "I passed Malraux information about conditions in the collective farms"; Pilnyak: "Since 1926 I have remained in contact with Professor Yonekawa, an officer on the [Japanese] General Staff. Through him I became a Japanese agent"), one finds oneself wondering to what extent the victims were conscious of the gulf between the accusations and their actual behavior.

Pilnyak, Babel, and Mandelstam knew that they had been hauled into the cellars of Lubianka not because of anything they had done—unless, say, writing a melancholy poem was a punishable deed—but because of who they were. Why then did they feel that if they would only promise to mend their ways, or write a sycophantic poem about Stalin, they would be spared? All three humiliated themselves by kowtowing to Stalin, and were promptly executed anyway.

This is not to blame the victims, of course, for clinging to the hope, however slim, that their fate might be averted. Their ability to act rationally further declined as some of their fellow writers joined their executioners. The knowledge that their colleagues were manufacturing reports about their "treasonable activities" and sending them on to the "proper authorities" was painful to live with.

One of the most fascinating chapters of *Arrested Voices* is called "Denunciation as a Literary Genre." That KGB informers included writers was widely assumed; in certain cases their identities were known. (If a writer regularly denounced his colleagues in public it could be safely assumed that he did so in secret communications to the OGPU, too.) But *Arrested Voices* is the first book, to my knowledge, that reproduces actual denunciations, often naming their authors. One of them was Boris Dyakov, a short story writer and staunch party member, who in 1936 was recruited as an agent under the pseudonym "Woodpecker." His letters and reports are surely among the more sickening documents of a sickening era. When he was himself arrested (which happened to the best in his fraternity) he penned an indignant letter to the KGB:

> I feel it my duty to inform you that for a number of years I have been an agent of the secret police. Moreover, no one forced me to do this work. I did this . . . because I have always believed that it is my duty . . . to help the security organs to uncover enemies of the USSR . . . I gathered materials for the press, exposing the wrecking activities of a number of veterinary workers who were responsible for the excessive incidence of plague among cattle and pigs. . . . Viktorov, the head of the veterinary service, was soon arrested and sentenced to be shot. . . . I submitted reports to the NKVD about the anti-Soviet agitation of persons engaged in literature and the arts . . . I uncovered a group of anti-Soviets in the Khabarovsk theater. . . .

And so on.

As for the interrogators, though they cannot always be identified, two men who excelled in "unmasking" the "literary spies" are named by Shentalinsky. They are Lev Schwartzmann and Nikolay Shivarov. The latter was exceedingly diligent in preparing his dossiers and honing his methods of breaking his victims, which is why he got "juicy" cases, such as Babel, Mandelstam, and Platonov. It was a tough job, requiring not only physical and psychological stamina but also a knowledge of Russian and Soviet literature and contemporary literary politics. More's the pity, therefore, that we know so little about these men. The psychology of criminals is always fascinating, and it would be useful to know what motivated them. Was it simply another job for them, or did they have personal reasons for persecuting writers, poets, and theatrical directors, or were they perhaps members of that peculiar genre—educated hoodlums?

The existence of this book gives rise to another question. Why did the KGB cooperate with liberal intellectuals in ferreting out the truth about the crimes of the Stalin era? Some answers suggest themselves. First, people like Aleksander Yakovlev and Mikhail Gorbachev himself, with the help of "the generation of the sixties"—that is, liberals who laid the groundwork for anti-Stalinism in Khrushchev's time—offered their support, often out of humane and laudable motives. Second, since Stalinism's re-

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maining apologists—people like Kunaev—were enemies not only of the liberal intelligentsia but of the whole policy of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, a partial alliance between the liberal intelligentsia and the new leadership made sense.

Finally, the KGB itself. By the 1970s and 1980s, even within that organization there were those who, as Shentalinsky illustrates, were repelled by the past modus operandi. The Schwartzmanns and Shivarovs were gone, and few in the secret service wanted to see them come back.

On occasion, the old beliefs clashed with the new. "We shall not surrender Pavlik Morozov!" said one KGB agent who cooperated with Shentalinsky—half menacingly, half in jest. Pavlik Morozov was a schoolboy who won instant martyrdom in the 1930s when he denounced his father as a "kulak," and was murdered for it by his uncle and other villagers. In fact, Pavlik Morozov, too, has now been removed from the pantheon, part of an ongoing cleansing process.

This is no guarantee that new odious chapters will not be written. The Chechen slaughters, Boris Yeltsin's lust for power and his penchant for vilifying his enemies, the creation of huge discrepancies between rich and poor parading under the guise of reform, all warn against facile optimism. Still, what Shentalinsky and his colleagues have accomplished is a distinct victory for the forces of decency in a society that has seen so little of it in the past. □

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Complexities of Multiculturalism

Editors:

Richard Wolin's excellent review of Will Kymlicka's *Multicultural Citizenship* (Winter 1997) surprisingly leaves one stone unturned. In referring to the case of the Pennsylvania Amish exemption from mandatory education laws, native American tribal protections, and the absolution of Jews and Muslims in some countries from Sunday closing laws, and other examples, he says, "of course, most of these examples are uncontroversial," without indicating which he thinks *are* controversial. The Amish and Native American instances differ radically from the Jewish-Muslim exemption, which only makes it possible for those who wish to do so to affirm group membership and take advantage of the waiver. The other two are far more complex.

While I agree that some cultural protection is needed, it should be recalled that the cultures involved are privileged without consideration for dissenters, minorities, spokesmen for social change, and the powerless. In *Wisconsin* v. *Yoder* (the Amish case) the rights of children are not regarded, though many who leave the Amish as adults testify to their childhood defenselessness against the power of the elders and the governing structures. Similarly, dissenters and social/tribal critics in certain Native American groups have no rights in the face of the excuse of tradition. In some instances they have been exiled from tribal lands and denied significant tribal rights for sedition and treason, because they have spoken out against governmental practices. In these two instances, children and dissenters, there is only the choice of abandonment of what is maintained as a static culture, without opportunity of participation in it as legitimate members.

MARILYN GARBER
Venice, Calif. □

Manifest Arrogance

Editors:

The recent symposium on the United States and China (Spring 1997) recalled for this reader the comment of the British newspaper the *Guardian* that the Gulf War was prosecuted to "protect the American way of driving." For Washington, economic interests will always come first. My country has struggled, against enormous odds, to maintain itself as a democracy, but U.S. foreign policy has consistently discriminated against India and in favor of its neighbors, which have been, and in some cases still are, ruled by theocrats, absolutists, generals, or commissars.

Indians are used to the gap between precept and practice as regards American foreign policy, but I was certainly unprepared for the blindness of American intellectuals, as manifest in your symposium. The arrogance of Michael Walzer's editorial, especially its ending ("So we need to know how they are faring, and whether and how we can help") was simply breathtaking. Do the editors of *Dissent* believe the fiction that the American government is, even in theory, interested in promoting democracy and human rights?

RAMACHANDRA GUHA
Berkeley, Calif.

Michael Walzer Replies

Speaking only for myself, I believe that different American governments sometimes act in ways that promote democracy and human rights, and sometimes don't. The point of the China symposium, which I was introducing, was to ask whether American pressure on behalf of democratic and labor union dissidents in China would have that effect, or not. The symposium started, as I said, from a well-warranted leftist suspicion about the uses of American power, but, very sensibly, it didn't end there. □

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The Last Page

". . . great poet of the murderous century, who persisting in folly attained wisdom."
—Czeslaw Milosz, "To Allen Ginsberg" (1995)

"All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor," Walt Whitman wrote in 1855. Allen Ginsberg, who was candid about his faults and about much else, died a beloved and forgiven poet. To be sure, there are those who neither loved nor forgave him and never will. For these critics (by no means all of them conservatives), Ginsberg was one of the worst cultural vandals of the sixties. But it was interesting to read some unlikely tributes to Ginsberg, not least appreciations in *National Review*, written by Jeffrey Hart and Richard Brookhiser.

Ginsberg made a point now and then of accosting his spiritual foes in person, with an air of ingenuous reasonableness. Hart and Brookhiser fondly recall his attending a publishing party at the *National Review* offices in the 1980s—hoping, in vain, to broker a fellowship deal for Peter Orlovsky from Hart, who had ties to the National Endowment for the Humanities. Looking back, Hart and Brookhiser make it clear that they hated Ginsberg's politics, and apart from "Kaddish" and "White Shroud" (and maybe bits of "Howl"), they find little to commend in his poetry. Yet the tone of both essays is oddly serious and gentle when they get to Ginsberg the man and cultural icon—and Brookhiser's piece even attempts a sincere if somewhat cockeyed reckoning with Beat writing. The irony of Whitman's life is that his democratic chants failed to gain, in his own time, either the respect of the literary establishment or a popular American readership. The triumph of Ginsberg's may be that so many Americans, including adversaries, listened and came away impressed by, if nothing else, his sweetness and his candor.

As a craftsman, Ginsberg expanded modern American poetry's breath, punctuating his long lines with the satori-like juxtapositions ("hydrogen jukebox," "your arms of fat Paterson porches") that he said had been inspired by Cézanne's paintings. He also had a marvelous lightness of touch and of spirit ("America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel") that leavened his more portentous verses. He wanted to be understood as a writer of clear-seeing poems, a blend (as he told an audience at Princeton last year) of Buddhism and an American empirical aesthetic that he associated with Whitman and William Carlos Williams. A drug-taking leftist homosexual and self-described nearsighted psychopath, he hoped, as he confessed some years ago, "to set surpassing example of sanity as measure for late generations."

At that last Princeton reading, Allen looked frail and rheumy, his palsied right eye slipping in and out of focus, one wrist swaddled in an Ace bandage due to a recent sprain. But he still had the power to hush a huge packed hall with the final stanza of "Kaddish." He still had the scholastic earnestness of his Columbia days, as he explained to his listeners (average age nineteen) the mid-sixties allusions in "Wichita Vortex Sutra." His good eye gleamed as he cleared his throat, adjusted the mike, and solemnly announced the title of a new poem: "Sphincter."

After the reading, a bunch of us repaired, at his insistence, to a local bar, where, upon his appearance, from odd corners, adoring men rose as if God incarnate had just walked in—some of them men I'd seen in the place before, but none of them men (this being Princeton) I'd ever imagined were gay. Across the room, two beautiful women, perfect strangers, bought a round of drinks and sent it over to our now crowded table. We were deep in February, but Allen Ginsberg, wearing a necktie and Irish tweed jacket, was as ever the King of May.

—Sean Wilentz □

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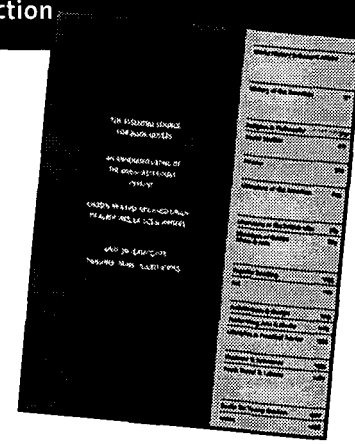

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